MASSENET
AND HIS OPERAS

H. T. FINCK

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Photograph by H. Manuel

JULES MASSENET

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BY

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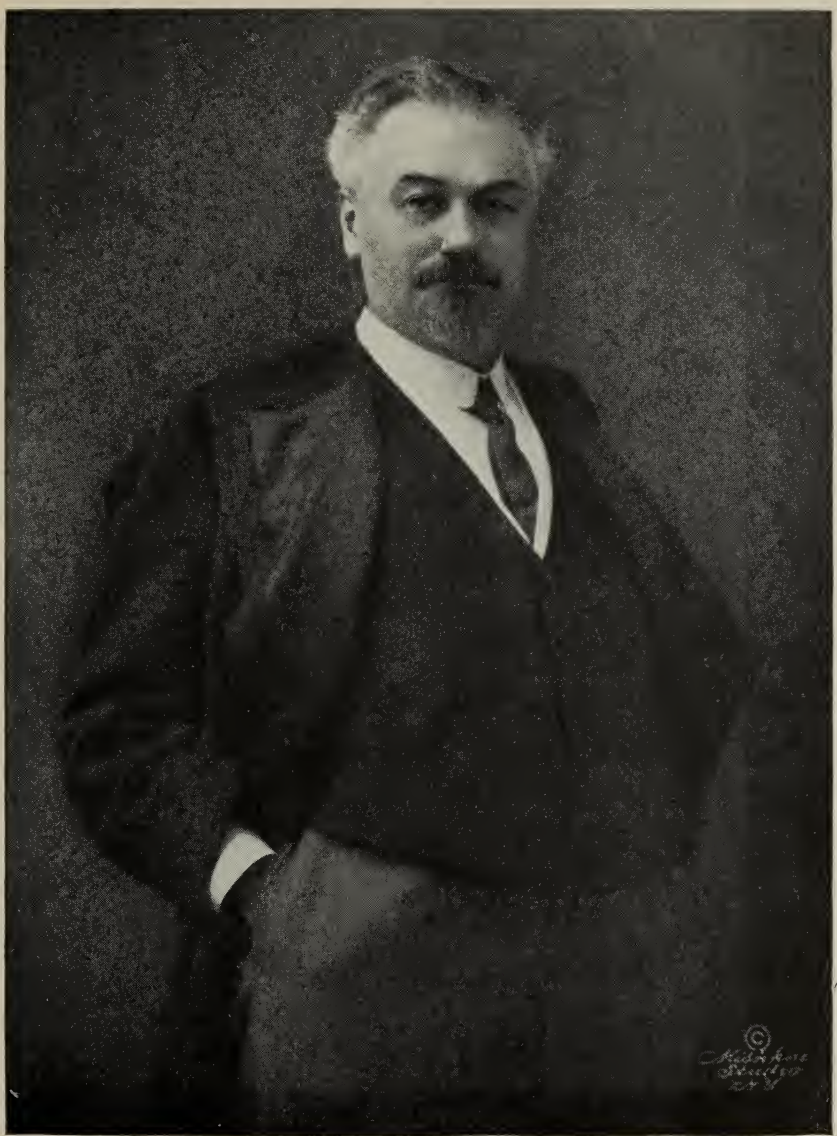
TO MY WIFE

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

I

MASSENET IN AMERICA



MASSENET
AND HIS OPERAS

I

MASSENET IN AMERICA

IN THE annals of music in America, the name of Oscar Hammerstein will be inseparably associated with that of Jules Massenet. Previous to the opening of the new Manhattan Opera House in New York, on December 3, 1906, several of the Massenet operas (*Manon*, *Werther*, *Le Cid*, *La Navarraise*) had been sung at the Metropolitan Opera House, or at the old Academy of Music; but, although eminent singers appeared at some of these productions, they were not usually carried out in the true Gallic spirit, and hence failed to make a lasting impression. Consequently the operas named appeared seldom on the house bill and there was no inclination to experiment with the other works which this composer, so popular abroad, was

producing at the average rate of one every two years.

A complete change in the situation followed the establishment of the Manhattan. To begin with, its auditorium was not one of those vast spaces in which subtle shades of vocalization and facial expression and orchestral delicacy are dissipated. This was an important factor. In the second place, Mr. Hammerstein pursued the wise policy of bringing over from Paris practically the whole personnel of the Opéra-Comique, including artists who had helped to create some of the operas of Massenet under his own supervision. He was also fortunate in having secured the invaluable services of Cleofonte Campanini, whose passion for rehearsing, and wonderful insight into the refinement and esprit of French music, were the third important factor in the successful transplanting to American soil of not only the operas of Massenet, but of other Parisian composers—Debussy and Charpentier—who had been previously neglected.

During his first season Mr. Hammerstein included only one Massenet opera in his repertory—the familiar *La Navarraise*—although he had among his singers MM. Renaud, Gilibert, and Dalmores. But he had no women singers of the French school to match them. For the second

season he brought over Miss Mary Garden, who, although born in Scotland and brought up in the United States, had become a queen of the Parisian stage, acknowledged superior to all French rivals in her line. With her and M. Renaud in the cast he produced, on November 25, 1907, *Thaïs*, with a sensational success that did not abate but actually increased during the following seasons, in which four other Massenet operas were produced, at this house, in the true Parisian style—*Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, *Hérodiade*, *Sappho*, *Grisélidis*.

If the other operas in the Manhattan repertory had drawn as large audiences as some of the Massenet works—notably *Thaïs* and the *Jongleur* —Mr. Hammerstein might have been able to keep up his plucky fight against the millionaire directors of the Metropolitan some years longer. Lovers of French opera will never cease regretting that he was obliged to give up the unequal contest. He would have doubtless produced others of Massenet's operas, particularly *Le Roi de Lahore*, *Esclarmonde*, and *Don Quichotte*. However, the American public now knows the calibre of this Parisian composer.

The growing interest in these operas and their composer induced John Lane Company to ask me to write a book on them—a thing which, strange to say, does not yet exist in the English language.

I gladly consented, as I admire Massenet's music, partly because of its refined orchestral colouring and piquant harmonisation, partly because of its frank and ingratiating melodiousness—a rare thing in these days of rampant cacophony and contrapuntal algebra *à la* Strauss and Reger. In my opinion, Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Gounod, and Massenet reflect the true spirit of France much more accurately than do certain eccentric innovators of our day; and for that reason I like not only to hear their works but to trace their origin.

The architecture of this volume may seem odd at first sight, but I believe that most of my readers will approve of it. After the sketch of Massenet's career and personality, I have introduced a chapter describing the five operas heard at the Manhattan, as these were chiefly responsible for our increased interest in Massenet. Then follow the four operas given at various times at the Metropolitan. Of these nine I could write from my own experience. The others, included in a third section as the less-known operas, I have never heard, and was therefore obliged to depend on newspapers and books for my remarks on them.

The only objection I can see to this arrangement is that the operas are not given in chronological order. As this order is, however, indicated in the list of works at the end of the volume, any-

MAURICE RENAUD

one who chooses is at liberty to follow it in reading the book. If Massenet's genius had developed gradually, as Wagner's did from *Rienzi* to *Parsifal*, I should have hesitated to adopt this unchronological plan for any reason. But his mind rather resembles Mendelssohn's, whose early works contain as valuable gems as his later ones. Versatility takes the place of development in Massenet; like Saint-Saëns he tried various styles, and with equal success.

II

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

II

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

PARENTS AND CHILDHOOD

JULES MASSENET'S grandfather, whose home was at Gravelotte (Moselle), became professor of history at the University of Strassburg. His son was a superior officer under the First Empire. "When the Bourbons were restored he sent in his resignation. As he had been a distinguished pupil of the Polytechnic School, he devoted himself to manufactures, and started important iron-works near St. Étienne (Loire). He thus became an iron-master, and was the inventor of those huge hammers which, crushing steel with extraordinary power by a single blow, change bars of metal into sickles and scythes. So it was that, to the sound of heavy hammers of brass, as the ancient poet says, I was born." *

* Cited from the autobiographic sketch contributed by Jules Massenet to *The Century Magazine* for November, 1892, which every admirer of his ought to read. All the French biographers, oddly enough, refer to these autobiographic notes as having appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*.

The date of this birth, an important one in the annals of French opera, was May 12, 1842. The full name given to the infant was Jules-Émile-Frédéric Massenet. He soon found this too cumbersome, and in adult life used only Jules, usually abbreviated to J. The name of his natal village was Montaud.

His mother was the second wife of his father, who had four children by his first marriage, four by the second. As the children of the first wife had no artistic inclinations, while those of the second, without exception, developed gifts for the arts, particularly music, it has been plausibly inferred that it was to his mother that Massenet owes his musical genius.

Her maiden name was Adélaïde Royer; she was educated by the Duchess d'Angoulème and learned to play the piano well. From her Jules got his first lessons on that instrument. They began on February 24, 1848, in Paris, to which the family had just moved, the father having been obliged to give up his work in the foundry because of ill-health. This was so serious that he was able to contribute little, henceforth, to the support of the family, which made it necessary for his wife to utilize her skill as a pianist by giving lessons to others besides her son.

AT THE CONSERVATOIRE

In his eleventh year, on January 10, 1853, Jules passed a satisfactory examination and was accepted as a pupil at the Conservatoire. At this examination he played the finale of Beethoven's opus 19, "astonishingly well," so Schneider says. He now became a pupil of Adolphe Laurent at the piano, and of Savard in solfège.

He enjoyed his music lessons so much that he was greatly disappointed when he had to sever his connection with the Conservatoire, in 1855, because the family left Paris to live at Chambéry, where it was hoped his father's health would be benefited by the pure air.

Hugues Imbert (following Hippolyte Hostein) writes that in May or June, 1855, Jules suddenly disappeared. The police were notified and succeeded in finding him, not far from Chambéry, in a miller's cart, bound for Paris via Lyons. He was brought back, but once more ran away, and this time succeeded in reaching Paris, where his parents, seeing that he was so determined, allowed him to remain.

Schneider, the latest and most elaborate biographer, doubts this story, which, morever, is not corroborated by Massenet himself, who says, in his autobiographic sketch concerning the

Chambéry episode: "At this period my father's ill health forced us to leave Paris, and so put a stop to my music for several years.* I took advantage of this period to finish my literary studies. But the pain of separation from the Conservatoire gave me courage enough to beg my parents (whom my wish distressed) to give me permission to return, and I did not again leave Paris until the day when, having obtained the first grand prize for musical composition (1863), I left for Rome with a scholarship from the Académie de France."

When he left his parents to return to Paris, he lived with an aunt, Mme. Cavallié-Massenet, who was pleased by his devotion to his studies but aggrieved by some of his pranks. Schneider relates, on the authority of a neighbour, that in those days Jules's favourite amusement seemed to be to walk down the Rue Rochechouart with his boon companions, uttering yells which frightened "tout le quartier."

In 1860 he entered the harmony class of Reber, and in the following year he began to study composition with Ambroise Thomas. He also took special harmony lessons of Savard, and worked

* This is obviously a lapse of memory. Imbert says that the records of the Conservatoire show that Massenet was absent from January 24, 1855, only till October of the same year.

as diligently as he had done a few years previously when Jules Vallès remembered him as a youth with long blond hair and deep eyes. "Though a mere boy, he impressed us (nous intimidait), and almost inspired respect in us by his unremitting hard work; he was as regular as a pendulum, sitting down before the piano to practise at the same hour every day."

As his parents were too poor to send him a monthly allowance, and he did not wish to impose too much on his aunt, he looked about for some way of earning an extra penny while he was a student at the Conservatoire. For a few months he played the triangle at the Gymnase; then he got the post of kettle-drummer in the orchestra of the Théâtre Lyrique. Here he beat the drums three evenings every week, receiving fifty cents for each performance.

At this time began his lifelong friendship with Victorin Joncières, who left the Conservatoire because his teacher, Leborne, would not allow him to enthuse over Richard Wagner, and who became famous in later years as a critic and opera composer. "Attached to his piano from morning to night," Joncières wrote in *Le Gaulois* (October 23, 1898) regarding this episode in Massenet's life, "he beat the kettle-drums three times a week at the Théâtre des Italiens, and every

Friday at the Café Charles. I believe he kept his place as drummer in the salle Ventadour till the day when he took the Grand Prix de Rome."

Joncières relates in the same article how he got acquainted with Massenet. Having composed a piece which he dared not send to the conductors of public concerts, he called on a man who trained an amateur orchestra in the Café Charles. This musician told him: "We play only the masters here; however, if a work that has merit is submitted to us, we try it. There is our kettle-drummer"—pointing at a young man who was just then tuning his instrument—"he has some talent; he has written a Marche Religieuse which we shall play some day at Saint-Pierre de Montmartre, on the occasion of a solemn festival." He then told Joncières that he happened just then to have no one to beat the big drum and invited him to take his place next to the kettle-drummer.

Massenet, Joncières continues, "was at that time little more than a boy; beardless, with a small pug nose, a high forehead, long hair tossed back, a pale face illumined by two small eyes with an expression of both mischief and kindness. He courteously made room for me, and I seized the drumstick and the cymbals for the perform-

ance of the Lestocq overture. . . . Since that time, under all circumstances, I have found him a good comrade, devoted, obliging—a man for whom I, on my part, never neglected to show my sincere admiration and my profound affection."

Hippolyte Hostein relates in his *Historiettes et Souvenirs d'un homme de Théâtre* how Massenet, having earned the sum of two hundred francs by beating the kettle-drums, took it to Savard (of whom, as already stated, he had taken extra harmony lessons) to pay for them. Thereupon the professor told him that he had a mass by Adam, for military band, which he had been asked to arrange for orchestra. He had no time—would Massenet do it? The young man was delighted at the opportunity to show what he had learned. As soon as the arrangement was completed, he brought the MS. to Savard, who sent for him a few days later and praised him for what he had done, adding that, as the work was paid for and Massenet had done it all, he, of course, would receive the money. With that he gave him back the two hundred francs he had paid for the twenty lessons, and insisted on his taking them: "Point de refus, point de fausse délicatesse, je ne les admettrais pas, mon ami, je vous en préviens."

HAPPY DAYS IN ROME

The great ambition of every student at the Paris Conservatoire is to win the Grand Prix de Rome. To get it means that the French Government will pay him annually, for three years, 2,310 francs for general expenses, besides 1,200 francs for lodging and food, and 600 francs more to pay for his journey to Rome, making altogether some $800. Once a year, in July, there is an examination; each candidate, in Massenet's days, was locked up in a room, not much better than a prison cell, in which he had to write a cantata or other work of considerable dimensions, which, in the case of the winner, was produced at the Opéra, whereupon he was solemnly proclaimed a "Lauréat," and crowned with laurel. Nearly all the great French composers were thus crowned, at the beginning of their career, as winners of the Prix de Rome; among them Hérold, Ambroise Thomas, Halévy, Gounod, Berlioz, Bizet, Debussy.

Massenet's turn came in 1863. He had been a student of the Conservatoire eight years; he had taken, from year to year, prizes, for piano, counterpoint, fugue; and now came the prize of prizes, the official recognition of exceptional ability, the opportunity to travel, to see the world,

to study in the great capitals of Europe—all at the expense of the state!*

In the autobiographic sketch written for *The Century*, Massenet exclaims rapturously: "Oh, those two lovely years in Rome at the dear Villa Medici, the official abiding place of holders of institute scholarships—unmatched years, the recollection of which still vibrates in my memory, and even now helps me to stem the flood of discouraging influences.

"It was at Rome that I began to live; there it was that, during my happy walks with my comrades, painters or sculptors, and in our talks under the oaks of the Villa Borghese, or under the pines of the Villa Pamphili, I felt my first stirrings of admiration for nature and for art. What charming hours we spent in wandering through the museums of Naples and Florence! What tender, thoughtful emotions we felt in the dusky churches of Siena and Assisi! How thoroughly forgotten was Paris with her theatres and her rushing crowds! Now I had ceased to be merely a 'musician'; now I was much more than a musician. This ardor, this healthful fever still sustains me; for we musicians, like poets, must be the interpreters of true emotion. To feel,

* The name of the cantata with which he won the prize was *David Rizzio*.

to make others feel—therein lies the whole secret!"

This was written about the twenty-one-year-old Massenet by the fifty-year-old Massenet. It must have been a period of exceptional happiness, for, continuing his rhapsody, he calls it "a life full of work, full of sweet tranquillity of mind, a life such as I never have lived again."

There have been many sarcastic flings at the Paris Conservatoire because of its custom of sending its best pupils to Rome, a city by no means among the first as regards musical opportunities and performances.

Massenet looked at the matter from a broader point of view. "Yes," he wrote, "I am thoroughly in favor of this exile,—as it is called by the discontented. I believe in residing there, for such a residence may give birth to poets and artists, and may awaken sentiment that otherwise might remain unknown to those in whom they lie dormant. . . .

"I believe that being forced to live far away from their Parisian habits is a positive advantage. The long hours of solitude in the Roman Campagna, and those spent in the admirable museums of Florence and Venice, amply compensate for the absence of musical meetings, of orchestral concerts, of theatrical representations,—in short, of music.

How few of these young men, before leaving France, ever knew the useful and penetrating charm of living alone—in close communion with nature or art, and the day in which art and nature speak to you makes you an artist, an adept; and on that day, with what you have already learned, and with what you should already know, you can create in strong and healthy fashion. How many garnered impressions and emotions will live again in words as yet unwritten!"

Scholars should travel, he declares, and he proceeds to relate how, when he was a scholar he left Rome during many months. With a friend or two he would go to Venice or down the Adriatic; run over, perhaps, to Greece; and on the way back, stop at Tunis, Messina, and Naples. "Finally, with swelling hearts, we would see the walls of Rome; for there, in the Academy of France, was our home. And then, how delightful to go to work in the healthful quiet, in which we could create without anything to preoccupy us—no worries, no sorrows."

Among the talented young men who dwelt in the villa Medici with Massenet as pensioners of the French Government were Carolus-Duran, who subsequently became a famous painter, and Chaplain, the well-known engraver. The latter, in a speech made in the Académie des Beaux-

Arts, recalled an incident that occurred one summer day on the road from Tivoli to Subiaco, when a band of students halted at one place to enjoy the sight of the wonderful Roman Campagna: "Suddenly, at the foot of a path we had just climbed, a shepherd began to play a sweet slow air on his pipe, the notes of which died away, one by one, in the silence of the evening. While listening, I glanced at a musician who made one of the party, curious to read his impressions in his face; he was putting down the shepherd's air in his note-book. Several years later, a new work by that young composer was played in Paris. The air of the Subiaco shepherd had become the superb introduction to *Marie Magdeleine*."

A more powerful influence than folk-tunes came into his life at this time and helped to fertilize his musical fancy—the feeling of love, to which music owes more than to all other things combined.

MARRIAGE AND RETURN TO PARIS

At one of the receptions given by the director of the Villa Medici, at which eminent men and women of all countries were usually assembled, Massenet met Liszt. The great pianist still gave lessons to select pupils, but he longed to devote himself to religious duties. He had satisfied

himself of Massenet's exceptional gifts and asked him to take his place as teacher in the home of Mme. Sainte-Marie. This lady had a charming young daughter, for whom the lessons were intended, and with whom the young composer promptly fell in love.

His proposal of marriage was not accepted at once, for an obvious practical reason: What would the young couple live on? In the meantime he enjoyed the privilege of giving lessons to his beloved, and of being a regular frequenter of the musical soirées given by Mme. Sainte-Marie. At these he sometimes played with Liszt, sometimes with Sgambati, one of the few Italian composers of note who chose to write for the concert-hall rather than the opera-houses.

Like other lovers, he had in his room a picture of his idol, which stimulated him to do his best in writing the compositions he had to send to Paris in accordance with the rules and regulations for winners of the Prix de Rome.

There was another rule he had to defer to—a paragraph stipulating that, after a year in Italy, the prize-winner must visit Germany and Austria-Hungary and remain there another year, whereupon he was at liberty to return either to Rome or to France for the third year of his scholarship.

Accordingly, on December 17, 1865, he started

on his journey northward, to get a glimpse of the principal cities in the countries indicated. At Pesth, so Schneider informs us, he remained several months and wrote his *Scènes Hongroises.* In Bohemia, also, he was impressed by the musical local color.

On the eighth of October, 1866, he returned to Rome and married Mlle. Sainte-Marie. His own laconic account of this event is cited by Imbert: "En 1865 nous étions fiancés, et quand je quittais Rome l'année suivante pour retourner à Paris, je n'étais plus garçon."

Impatient love had evidently routed prudence, for Massenet's financial outlook was no brighter in 1866 than it had been the year before. In fact, there was less to live on, for the contributions from the Conservatoire ceased. "He gave lessons," Schneider relates. "In summer, when lessons became few in number because of vacation time, Massenet undertook to give piano recitals at the watering-places. And when, on his return, the income from piano lessons became too uncertain, he resumed his place as kettle-drummer at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin."

One evening, while thus employed, he had an opportunity to distinguish himself. In the play that was given, there was a scene in which Napoleon suddenly enters, while the populace

cries "Vive l'Empereur!" But the actor to whom this part was entrusted failed to appear, to the consternation of the stage manager. At this moment Massenet saved the situation by making a terrific noise with his drums, which impressed the audience more than the appearance of the supernumerary dressed as the emperor would have done. The drummer was congratulated by the leader of the orchestra and the manager. He had given proof of his theatrical instinct—an instinct which he was destined ere long to manifest as a composer of operas.

It was not as a writer of operas, however, that he first made a name for himself; he did this with his oratorios, and these were preceded by concert pieces, some of which were received favourably.

CONCERT-HALL SUCCESSES

English and American newspapers print many complaints that native composers are neglected in favour of foreigners. In Weber's time German composers had cause for a similar reproach, and as for France, everybody knows that Berlioz had to go to Germany for recognition of his genius. Saint-Saëns, Bizet, Gounod, had their early struggles made harder by this attitude toward

home-made compositions, and Massenet was no exception. Colonne and Lamoureux were not yet in the field, and Pasdeloup did not, at that time, display the same interest in young French composers that he did later. His audiences wanted to hear the classic master works, particularly those of Germany, and in order to prosper he had to give them what they demanded. It is instructive to read the comments of Servières on the "Concert National" of 1873—a series of six concerts given by the publisher Hartmann, at which French pieces exclusively were performed: "While this undertaking was beneficial to more than one musician now famous, it was, from a financial point of view, disastrous."

Pasdeloup, however, did lend Massenet a helping hand by performing, in 1867, at one of his Concerts Populaires, his first *Suite d'Orchestre*.*

This suite gave rise to a newspaper squabble which is worth mentioning. At its first performance the suite was received favourably; but when it was repeated, the following year, there was less

* In the preceding year Arban's orchestra had played, at the Casino, one of the three compositions (*Pompeia*) which Massenet had written in Rome; the other two—which were sent to Paris by way of proof of his industry and progress—being a *Grande ouverture de concert* and a *Requiem* for four and eight voices, with accompaniment of organ, violoncello, and double basses.

applause, and this caused the witty but vulgar and ignorant Albert Wolff to write a feuilleton in the *Figaro* in which he made merry over this accident to the young composer. His flippant article aroused the indignation of Théodore Dubois,* who wrote a letter to the *Figaro*, deploring Wolff's exultation over the discouragement meted out to "a young composer who may have talent and a future." Addressing Wolff directly, he said: "You take no account of the deplorable effect produced by an article of that kind, and you sacrifice the sacred interests of art to the pleasure of being funny."

Massenet himself wrote to Wolff a personal letter in which he said: "In yesterday's *Figaro* you devote to the performance of my Symphony (which is an orchestral suite) at the Cirque Napoléon, an article which is extremely amusing and over which I have laughed a great deal. If you discover any good in me, Monsieur, I, for my part, find you exceedingly witty, and there is no reader of the *Figaro* who does not agree with me on that point.

"Only, like all men of esprit, you have this in

* Dubois was five years older than Massenet, and won the Roman prize in 1861. He became the director of the Paris Conservatoire in 1896 and retained that post till 1905. As a composer he also won distinction.

common with 'les imbéciles' that you are liable to err, and it is particularly for the purpose of setting you right on a point that escaped you that I am writing this letter.

"My Orchestral Suite (which is not a symphony) was not played on Sunday for the first time, but for the second time, and it is probably owing to its favourable reception last year that I owe M. Pasdeloup's kindness of repeating it this season.

"Two years ago, Monsieur, I was still in Rome, where young composers live in admiration of beautiful treasures of the past and in ignorance of the number of petty pleasures which await them on their return to Paris."

No harm came to Massenet from this episode; on the contrary, as Imbert remarks, it was an advantage to the young composer to have his name thus bandied about in one of the most widely circulated Parisian journals.

In the musical world, notoriety is almost as valuable as fame. The public forgets whether what it read was praise or censure; it simply remembers the name, and that the owner of it was considered of sufficient importance to be written about at length. Massenet evidently knew this; and that was why he laughed over Wolff's malicious feuilleton. He found it the

easier to do this because some of the real critics (Wolff was simply a dabbler in many things) addressed words of encouragement to the composer of that suite.

A few weeks after the first performance of this orchestral work, Massenet had made his début as an opera composer with a trifle called *La Grand' Tante*, which was sung altogether sixteen times, thus making an encouraging beginning in this field, too.

One of the most important events in his career occurred in 1868. He had sent his settings of two poems by Armand Sylvestre to the young publisher, Hartmann, who liked them so much (they were the *Poème d'Avril* and *Poème du Souvenir*) that henceforth he became his friend and protector, publishing his manuscripts, offering suggestions for new ones, and helping to provide promising librettos.

IN WAR TIME

During the Franco-Prussian War, Massenet belonged to a *bataillon de marche*. "The Prussian cannons," he writes in his autobiographic sketch, "answering those of Mont Valérien, often lugubriously punctuated the fragments that I tried to write during the short moments of rest that guard

duty, marching around Paris, and military exercises on the ramparts, left us. There the musician, in the physical weariness of this novel life, vainly trying to find a few moments of forgetfulness, did not altogether abdicate his rights. In the leaves of a finished score, but one which will never be brought before the public, *Méduse*, I find annotated the patriotic cries of the people, and the echoes of the *Marseillaise* sung by the regiments as they passed my little house at Fontainebleau on their way to battle. And so in other fragments I can read the bitter thoughts that moved me when, having returned to Paris before it was invested, I was inspired by the woeful times that were upon us during the long winter of that terrible year."

In October, 1871, Pasdeloup conducted Massenet's second orchestral suite, which was favourably received, one number being even redemanded; yet he felt that writing groups of orchestral pieces—not to speak of symphonies—was not his métier. Concerning this *Deuxième Suite* he himself wrote in a letter to a friend: "I ought to be very well satisfied, but I am not. For this is not yet the kind of music I should like to have you enjoy; I do not care much for this suite of short pieces. However, as *orchestre spécial*, there are pleasing effects here and there

which stand out with sincerity and clearness. The instrumentation of these pieces is not of the colour scheme of my usual orchestra. What is most prominent in this *suite* is the pictorial element."

It consists of three numbers—a dance, followed by an interlude, and a wedding procession with benediction.

When he wrote that he ought to be very well satisfied with his suite he had in mind the applause bestowed on it. In the following year, further cause for satisfaction was provided by the fact that from the funds of the Ministry of Public Instruction five hundred francs were given him toward defraying the expenses of printing his two orchestral suites. In the same year was staged his second opera, *Don César de Bazan*, which was sung eight times in 1872, and five times in 1873, without adding much to his reputation.

A SENSATIONAL SACRED DRAMA

Far more important from this point of view, and otherwise, was his first appearance in a new field, with his *Marie-Magdeleine*, a "sacred drama."

The plan for this much-discussed work was conceived by the publisher Hartmann, who engaged Louis Gallet to put it into verse. Massenet

began to set it to music in the autumn of 1871, and in the first month of the following year the score was completed. The next thing to do was to find someone willing to produce it. As Pasdeloup had repeatedly conducted shorter pieces by Massenet, it was hoped that he might be willing to undertake this more ambitious work. So the composer and publisher called on him. What happened is amusingly related in the *Revue du Siècle* of February, 1890, by Julien Torchet, who got the story from Massenet himself.

The famous conductor begged to be excused a moment because he had to hear two young girls who were looking for an engagement. Then he turned to Massenet, who had explained the reason for his visit, and said: "Sit down at the piano, and let us lose no time."

The young composer plunged into the score. Hardly had he begun when a gust of wind came down the chimney and filled the room with suffocating smoke. Pasdeloup opened the window, closed it, opened it again, and this continued throughout the playing of the score.

All this time Pasdeloup did not give the slightest indication of approval. One after another the composer played the numbers he felt proud of—the Hallelujah, the duo, the Pater Noster, the Resurrection. The last page finished, he gathered

up the manuscript—not a word from Pasdeloup. At last the conductor got up, patted Massenet on the shoulder, and said: "Well, my boy, you have certainly earned your dinner!" And that was all !

Hartmann remained to ask confidentially what Pasdeloup thought of the score. "It is ridiculous —absurd," was the reply. "Magdalen sings: 'I hear the steps of Christ!' The deuce! One does not hear the steps of Christ." And that settled the matter.

A wiser artist than he came to the rescue. Pauline Viardot-Garcia, the greatest operatic contralto of her time, heard Massenet play selections from his work and was so much impressed that she studied the score and became eager to appear in it, although she had practically retired from the stage. With such a magnet, it was easy to arrange matters, and on April 11, 1873, the first performance was given, under Edouard Colonne, before a large and enthusiastic audience.

All Paris talked about *Marie-Magdeleine* the next day. "A new thing in music !" some exclaimed rapturously. "An oratorio without dry fugues or contrapuntal ensembles, but full of life and love and melody! What joy ! "

No less a judge than Camille Saint-Saëns wrote: "Let us begin by recording, with joy

in our heart, the complete success of the most audacious experiment made by any musician in Paris since Berlioz's *l'Enfance du Christ.* M. Massenet, for that matter, is not a Berlioz and there will not be wanting persons who will congratulate him on that. Berlioz knew not this art of balancing, so much in vogue at present, which makes it possible to have friends in all camps; to displease certain individuals was one of the ambitions of Berlioz and it must be admitted that he succeeded thoroughly. Massenet's muse is less haughty; she is a virtuous personage who does nothing against her conscience, but she loves to please and she puts flowers in her hair.

"Let him who is without sin cast the first stone!

"Some have called it an innovation to give an oratorio a dramatic form, but that is absolutely incorrect. The oratorios of Handel, typical of the genre, do not in any way differ from his operas. . . .

"What is new, is the realistic aspect of this work by MM. Gallet and Massenet; they have secured for it Oriental colour with its thousand coquetteries: they have omitted from it grandeur and prestige légendaire. The public, always in quest of dainties, has given its approval.

"Massenet's music is original without being

odd, and entertaining without being trivial; that is more than one needs for success. On examining it closely one discovers, not without surprise, that it proceeds from that of Gounod, of which it nowhere gives the impression. It is Gounod at bottom, but concentrated, refined, and crystallised. Massenet is to Gounod what Schumann is to Mendelssohn.

"What is pleasing in *Marie-Magdeleine* is the felicity with which the composer has expressed sentiments of extreme delicacy. A breath would have tarnished the love of Jesus and Mary Magdalen; M. Massenet has preserved all its ideal purity."

The English critic, Arthur Hervey, wrote of *Marie-Magdeleine:* "It was the Bible doctored up in a manner suitable to the taste of impressionable Parisian ladies—utterly inadequate for the theme, at the same time very charming and effective." Why "utterly inadequate to the theme"? Must a purely human episode like this be treated with fugual austerity and dignity? Massenet's aim was, in his own words, to emphasise the *human* side of the story, and in that he succeeded.

Mr. Hervey also wrote: "It is very different from what we understand in England as an oratorio." But Massenet did not designate it

as an oratorio, nor even as an "oratoriette," as one of the French critics called it. His name for it was "sacred drama."

In 1893 Camille Bellaigue issued a book, *Psychologie Musicale*, in which he said concerning this work: "Its form is not that of an oratorio, but of a sacred drama, and if the French public had, to the same degree as the German, a love for art and respect for things divine, the performance of *Marie-Magdeleine* would be possible, like that of the *Passion* at Oberammergau and of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth."

Thirteen years later *Marie-Magdeleine* was actually produced as a music drama, with scenery and costumes, at the Opéra-Comique in Paris.

Among those most enthusiastic over *Marie-Magdeleine* when first produced was Ambroise Thomas, whose *Mignon* (1866) and *Hamlet* (1868) had given him a place among France's foremost composers. He wrote to Massenet, under date of April 12, 1873:

"Being obliged to go to the country to-day, I shall be unable, to my regret, to see you before your departure. I therefore make haste, my dear friend, to let you know how much pleasure you gave me last night and how happy I was over your splendid success! . . .

"It is a serious work, both noble and moving;

it is quite *of our time;* you have proved that one can follow the path of progress while remaining clear, temperate, and measured.

"You have been able to move others because you were moved yourself.

"You have happily reproduced the adorable poetry of this sublime drama!

"In treating a mystical subject wherein one is in danger of falling into excesses of tonal gloom and severity of style, you proved yourself a colourist preserving charm and light.

"Be content; your work will be reproduced and endure.

"Au revoir, I embrace you with all my heart,

"AMBROISE THOMAS."

It remained, however, for a foreigner, Russia's greatest composer, to pay this work and its creator the most eloquent tribute. On July 18, 1880, Tchaikovsky wrote to his brother Modeste: "Yesterday I wrote to you about Bizet, to-day I am enthusiastic about Massenet. I found his oratorio, *Mary Magdalene*, at N. F.'s. After I had read the text, which treats not only of the relations between Christ, the Magdalene, and Judas, but also of Golgotha and the Resurrection, I felt a certain prejudice against the work, because it seemed too audacious. When I began to play

it, however, I was soon convinced that it was no commonplace composition. The duet between Christ and the Magdalene is a masterpiece. I was so touched by the emotionalism of the music, in which Massenet has reflected the eternal compassion of Christ, that I shed many tears. Wonderful tears! All praise to the Frenchman who had the art of calling them forth. . . . The French are really first in contemporary music. All day long this duet has been running in my head, and under its influence I have written a song, the melody of which is very reminiscent of Massenet."

Written after this sacred drama but performed a few months before it, was *Les Erynnies*, a set of musical numbers contributed by Massenet, by request, to Leconte de Lisle's antique drama. As originally given, Massenet's numbers were all instrumental and scored for strings, three trombones, kettle-drums, and a gong. Subsequently, he added choruses and an effective Danse des Saturnales, rescoring the whole for full orchestra; and in this form the work was revived in 1876. The public did not seem to care much for this composition as a whole, but amateurs found in it, in the words of Noel and Stoullig, "un parfum d'antiquité," and one of its numbers is known

to everybody as the *Élégie*, the most popular of Massenet's songs.

MORE SEMI-RELIGIOUS WORKS

We have seen that the introduction to *Marie-Magdeleine* was the shepherd's air Massenet had heard in the Roman Campagna. In his autobiographic sketch he says, with reference to the first part of this work: "It was in truth of Magdala that I was then thinking; my imagination journeyed to far Judea, but what really moved me was the remembrance of the Roman Campagna, and this remembrance it was that I obeyed. I followed the landscape I had really known. Afterward, in writing the *Erynnies*, the love that I felt for an exquisite Tanagra terra-cotta dictated to me the dances for the first act of Leconte de Lisle's admirable drama."

Another influence which made itself felt at this time was that of the *Life of Christ* of Renan, at whose home Massenet was a frequent visitor. Under this influence, and encouraged by the success of his *Marie-Magdeleine*, he wrote two more semi-religious works, *Eve* and *La Vierge*. *Eve*, text by Gallet, was described on the title-page as "a mystery." It is a cantata for chorus and three soloists—Adam, Eve, and the Narrator.

It was first sung on March 18, 1875, and was received with enthusiasm, the prologue (the birth of woman) being particularly admired. Some of the critics again missed the "superhuman grandeur," the true "religious sentiment" they had looked for; others were offended by "la note tendre, voluptueuse"; but, as Camille Bellaigue asked: "Is this note, discreetly attenuated, out of place in the story of the first sin?" *

No one was more delighted with Eve than the composer of *Faust.* The day after its first performance, Gounod wrote to Massenet:

"The triumph of one of the elect must be a feast for the church. You are one of the elect; Heaven has marked you as one of its children; I feel it by the stir your beautiful work has made in my heart! Prepare yourself for the rôle of a martyr; it is the rôle for all that comes from above and that annoys whatever comes from below. But do not sigh and become downcast. Remember that when God said: 'celui-ci est un vase d'élection,' he added: 'et je lui montrerai combien il lui faudra souffrir pour mon nom.'

* In judging these choral works of Massenet it is well to bear in mind, as pointed out by Octave Fouque, that to Massenet and his librettist the Bible was simply a book of poetic legends, like the *Vedas*, the *Iliad*, the *Nibelungenlied.*

"Therefore, my dear friend, use your wings boldly and confide yourself without fear to the lofty regions where the lead of the earth does not reach the bird of heaven.

"Yours with all my heart,

"CH. GOUNOD."

Five years later, on May 22, 1880, *La Vierge* was produced, a "légende sacrée" in four acts, dealing with the Annunciation, the Marriage at Cana, Good Friday, and the Assumption. According to Solenière and Imbert it was repeated a week later, but Schneider asserts that it was not sung more than once. Vacorbeil had chosen this work as the first in a series of historic concerts to be given at the Opéra, but the sale for the repetition of it, a week later, was so small that no performance took place, and the historic concerts came to an end at once. The fickle public, which had so warmly applauded *Marie-Magdeleine* and *Eve*, seemed to want nothing more of the kind; or, perhaps, the trouble was that the wrong place had been chosen for presenting a serious work of a religious character. Even at the première, the audience consisted largely of invited music-lovers. Massenet himself conducted, and of his trials and sufferings on this occasion he has made a frank confession:

"An icy silence in the hall! The work which I had composed with so much ardour and devotion was tumbling down. And I was at the accursed conductor's desk, unable to leave it! I trembled with vexation, and partly with shame. What a cruel humiliation! The orchestral players, usually so reserved, looked at me as if they would like to say: 'Poor boy!' I read pity for myself in the eyes of my soloists. An attempt was made to get a repetition of one of the numbers, but I understood that the public allowed my friends to have their way simply out of compassion for me. Behind me, I heard someone in the parquet say, 'it's deadly' (c'est crevant). I felt that the public was tired; it began to leave, and I could scarcely remain at my stand. When it was all over, I left in dismay, insane with disappointment and rage."

PROFESSOR AND MEMBER OF INSTITUTE

This lamentable fiasco was the more keenly felt because it came three years after the brilliant success of his first important opera, *Le Roi de Lahore*, which also had become popular in Milan, Turin, Rome (where he helped to prepare the performance), Venice, Munich, Dresden, London, and other cities.

It was the more keenly felt, also, because two great distinctions had been conferred upon him in the meantime. On October 7, 1878, he had been appointed professor of counterpoint, fugue, and composition at the Conservatoire, of which Ambroise Thomas was then the director; and in the following month he had been chosen a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, his rivals being Saint-Saëns, Boulanger, Membrée, and Duprato. The first ballot gave Saint-Saëns 13 votes and Massenet 12, Boulanger having 6, Membrée 2, and Duprato 1. In the second ballot Membrée and Duprato dropped out, Boulanger had 3, Saint-Saëns 13, and Massenet 18.

As soon as the result was announced, Massenet (who was seven years younger than Saint-Saëns) telegraphed to him: "My dear confrère, the Institute has committed a great injustice." *

When Bizet died (1875), broken-hearted, because his *Carmen* seemed a failure, Colonne gave

* As a matter of course, Massenet had been awarded at an early date (1876) the "Légion d'honneur" which, as Grieg once wrote wittily, is no "honour" because "legions" (at present over half a million) share it. Subsequently, however, he was promoted to the higher ranks of this order, which mean something: in 1888 he became "officier de la Légion d'honneur"; in 1895, "commandeur"; and in 1899, "grand-officier."

a memorial concert for which Massenet wrote an orchestral *Lamento*. One of his functions at the Conservatoire was to take Bizet's place as examiner in the organ and composition classes.

There was great joy among the students when Massenet became professor of composition. His predecessor, François Bazin (who succeeded Ambroise Thomas, in this, the most important, professorship, when Thomas became director of the institute) was a dry pedant and reactionary, while Massenet, as his sacred dramas and his operas had shown, was a man of the time, from whom students could learn how to "get into the swim."

He was a hard worker himself, and he made his pupils work hard. The best of them—those who aimed at the Prix de Rome—the object of every ambitious student—had to come to his house at seven o'clock in the morning and go through their paces assiduously. He knew how to make his lessons interesting as well as exacting. In the words of Schneider: "il se fit l'ami de ses élèves"; he made them look on him as a friend and gave his lessons the form of an entertaining conversation. He did not confine his hints to matters of technic, but laid bare the inner spirit of the pieces he analysed. "He did not teach them how to write symphonies, but confined

himself to point out the merits of those written by Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, or Schumann. But he devoted himself to showing these young folks how to compose a cantata, how to give life to a lyric scene. They were practical lessons, having in view the securing of the Prix de Rome, the apogee of a Conservatory course."

His success in turning out pupils with the ability to win this prize soon became the talk of the town. Conservatives who disliked him because of his popularity, his liberal policy and independence, sometimes spoke of his influence disparagingly; but while it was undoubtedly true that some of his pupils wrote more *à la Massenet* than was good for their own reputation, the list of his pupils during the eighteen years that he taught at the Conservatoire includes the names of several men who had the ability to impress a style of their own on their works—Alfred Bruneau, Gabriel Pierné, Xavier Leroux, Gustave Charpentier, Paul Vidal,—pupils of whom any professor might be proud.

In 1896 Massenet resigned his professorship. During the eighteen years of his activity as professor he had found time to compose nine operas: *Hérodiade* (1881), *Manon* (1884), *Le Cid* (1885), *Esclarmonde* (1889), *Le Mage* (1891), *Werther* (1892), *Thaïs* (1894), *Le Portrait de Manon*

(1894), *La Navarraise* (1894). But he was now fifty-four years old and felt that he ought to save all his energies for his creative work.

His resignation was greatly regretted. It occurred in the same year that Ambroise Thomas died. The post of director, thus made vacant, was offered to Massenet, but even this supreme honour could not persuade him to change his mind.

The story of his life since 1896 is simply the story of his operas, which will be related in other chapters, together with diverse personal experiences connected with them, among which those to be told in the chapter on *Werther* are of particular interest.

III

PERSONAL TRAITS AND OPINIONS

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PERSONAL TRAITS AND OPINIONS

A PEN PICTURE BY SERVIÉRES

IN THE year in which Massenet resigned his professorship at the Conservatoire and refused the directorship, Georges Servières wrote the following vivid sketch of his personality and some of his traits:

"Massenet is now fifty-four years old, but he looks considerably younger. He wears his hair long, somewhat wavy at the back, and a blond moustache. His eyes are very quick in their movements; the expression is very gentle. His profile is finely cut. His shoulders are slightly stooping and he seems short, although he is of medium height. His movements are full of an ever-present, nervous vivacity. Just to see him one feels how natural is that feverish activity with which he spends himself, either in work, or in lessons, or in trips to foreign countries. Constantly he is being called away to some city or other to conduct the performance of one of his

works, or to superintend the final rehearsals of one of his last operas. Once the score is learned, the opera performed, he escapes ovations and returns to Paris.

"He could not count his triumphs in Vienna, in Pesth, in Italy, in Belgium. Quantities of wreaths, adorned with inscriptions in many tongues, faded laurels to which hang old ribbons, preserved their memory, hung on the walls of a sort of sanctum at the publisher Hartmann's, who had constituted himself the faithful depository of these treasures. It was here, in Daunon street, that Massenet could be found daily from five to seven; here that he received musicians desirous of knowing him, singers looking for an engagement, newspaper men eager for first news of his latest work. While M. Hartmann attended to practical matters, the master, with untiring obligingness, had an answer for everyone of these more or less importunate visitors, a few words which left each one satisfied.

"The amenity of Massenet's character, his affability, which was natural, no doubt, but must have been kept through force of will, for it triumphs over an ultra-nervous temperament, has given him hosts of friends.* He very

* Massenet was a close friend of Georges Bizet. After the premature death of the composer of *Carmen* he wrote a

rarely disparages his confrères. He exaggerates this kindness even to the weakness of extolling works he knows are not worth much. One wishes sometimes to see awake in him the instinctive horror of the artist toward platitudes—even those signed by great names—toward successes purchased by unfortunate concessions to bad taste. His kindness remains unalterable and is equalled only by his desire to win the good graces of his interlocutors."

SENSITIVENESS TO CRITICISM

His leniency toward the faults of others is only equalled by his personal sensitiveness. "His *bête noir* is criticism," writes Schneider—"why conceal it? One could not be more sensitive to criticism than he is—to the darts and arrows of the press, of friends and of others, all of which he dreads equally. When the day draws near for the public dress rehearsal of one of his operas he flees Paris, irritable and in bad humour. Some

Lamento for orchestra, which was performed on October 31, 1875, at the concert du Châtelet. M. Gallet had written for the occasion a poem which was recited by Mme. Galli-Marié to the accompaniment of the *adagietto* from *L'Arlésienne*. At the end M. Colonne performed the overture *Patrie* which Bizet had dedicated the year before to his friend Massenet.

H. T. F.

say that this is a sort of vanity, but those who know Massenet well do not think so. His great sensitiveness is simply a corollary of his kindness. His amiability is so general, that it seems hard for him not to get the benefit of the same disposition on the part of others. At bottom all this conceals, perhaps, an incommensurable timidity."

An operatic manager once said to him: "My dear Master, give me the secret of your abnormal creative ability. Every day you listen to a crowd of singers, you attend every rehearsal, and, besides, you are professor at the Conservatoire. When do you find time to work?" "When you are asleep," Massenet replied quickly.

Every morning from five to ten sees him at his table, busy with his manuscripts or his correspondence. No letter remains unanswered, and for every visitor he has a few minutes to spare, provided he is punctual. Casual callers he receives in his studio at his publisher's office. His home, at Égreville (Seine-et-Marne), is open to his friends only. Here he cultivates the flowers he loves, and gives to his grapevines his personal attention. Here, in rural solitude, and quiet, he also composes his operas. His favourite attire when at work is a red robe

de chambre. He calls the wearing of this, "homarder," Schneider tells us—"homard" being French for lobster.

Concerning his method of composing, Imbert gives these details: "After having mentally arranged the main outlines, he begins by making a lead-pencil sketch, which he copies in ink almost without a change, and from this sketch, which somewhat resembles an arrangement for piano, he makes the orchestral score. His dexterity equals that of the composer of the *Danse Macabre*, who also, like Massenet, composes without the aid of the piano. There is never a rough orchestral draft, so to speak, of the score; not that he never goes over again what he has written; but on the whole there are few corrections. The minutest shades, the movements of the bow, even, are marked with scrupulous care. But the composer is so sure of what he does that he sends the orchestral score to the printer before it has been played, and it is this score that the conductor uses."

Like all famous men, Massenet has his censors. A prominent singer whom I asked for his impressions, called him an "arriviste"—"a man who has always worked for success successfully; a man with a great talent, but not a compelling genius; a man who thoroughly knows his

business, but who has no great ideals. He was brought up by Jesuits a 'séminariste,' and has remained true to his bringing up, having thoroughly imbibed their principles. He would call a singer, man or woman, the most insulting names to a third person, then, if a phrase pleased him, change his tone completely to the artist—or even change with no specially good reason."

THE FAIR SEX

That he has been a great admirer of women it is needless to say to anyone familiar with his operas, for woman and love are the themes of most of them. And the women reciprocated. As Schneider puts it, "a woman is like a child; she goes instinctively to the person who loves her. This explains why his incessant glorification of woman made all women like him." "Ne nous y trompons pas," continues this Parisian; "elles respirent avec délices l'atmosphère de vertigineux amour qu'il a créée pour elles; elles se baignent avec ferveur dans ces ondes de volupté nerveuse auxquelles il les a initiées."

Massenet wrote some of his operas for prima donnas whom he admired particularly. For Emma Calvé he composed *La Navarraise* and *Sapho;* for the Californian, Sibyl Sanderson,

Esclarmonde and *Thaïs*. When *Esclarmonde* was about to be given, he wrote to Miss Sanderson:

"You show that I was right, since it is for you that I have written *Esclarmonde;* I had faith and you proved at the public rehearsal to-day, Saturday, May 11, 1889, that I have confided my rôle, unique in its difficulties of all sorts, to a unique artist. You are making your début, but I predict for you a future also unique. Later on, when speaking of theatrical glory, people will name Sanderson.

"Yours with much appreciation,

"MASSENET."

It would be unfair to give the impression that women alone have admired Massenet. The distinctions conferred on him by men evince the contrary. Doubtless the distinguishing trait of this music is a feminine tenderness, but this tenderness appeals to many men as much as it does to any women.

A few weeks before the production of *Werther* in Paris, Massenet became a member of the Union Vélocipédique de France. A grand banquet was given in his honour, one of the features of which was an exhibition of proficiency on the part of the new member, who rode round the

table on his bicycle. A spiteful critic wrote subsequently that he did this to advertise himself. But in 1893 Massenet was already a very famous man, who did not need to exhibit himself as a "virtuose de la réclame."

At present Massenet lives almost like a hermit. In a letter to the author (dated August 6, 1910), a few pages of which are reproduced herewith in facsimile, he says: "Je vis en dehors de tout: dans le travail et la solitude." He pays an emphatic tribute to Schneider, as the most reliable of his biographers, refers to the first performances of his last two operas, explains why he cannot send statistics regarding the number of performances given of all his operas, and expresses his belief that I will be interested in his next operatic project although he cannot yet reveal what it is. With this letter he sent an autograph copy of the melody of his *Élégie* for this volume, which is reproduced on another page.

PATRIOTISM AND FRIENDSHIPS

Massenet is more emotional than most men, but not more so than most of the great composers are. It has been frequently intimated by unsympathetic critics that he is capable of being moved by only two sentiments—the love for

" Bacchus, 4 actes Théâtre de l'opéra
mai 1909.

" Don Quichotte, 3 actes
à l'opéra de Monte-Carlo
19 février 1910.

Ce dernier ouvrage va être joué à
Paris en décembre au théâtre lyrique.
à Monte Carlo le créateur a été
l'admirable Chaliapine [Don Quichotte]
et la Dulcinée a été créée
par Lucy Arbell de l'opéra —
cette artiste géniale à qui
je dois déjà la Tragique Thérèse
à Monte Carlo — et au printemps
à l'opéra comique de Paris.

x'7

Des ouvrages nouveaux
je ne puis en parler maintenant
n'ayant pas donné encore
mon consentement ; ils vous
intéresseront un jour si j'ai foi.

x'7

Je vous répète combien je
suis ému de votre pensée
et je vous en exprime mes
plus profonds sentiments.

Mallarmé

P.S. Ce serait un travail long que

woman and religious mysticism. Those who made this insinuation could not have heard his *Navarraise;* nor could they have read, in his autobiographic sketch in *The Century Magazine*, his truly masculine and impassioned outburst of patriotic fervour and grief. To cite a few lines of this: "Yes, truly, during those dark days of the siege of Paris, it was indeed the image of my dying country that lay bleeding in me, feeble instrument that I was, when, shivering with cold, my eyes blinded with tears, I composed the bars of the *Poème du Souvenir* for the inspired stanzas written by my friend, the great poet Armand Silvestre, *Arise, belovèd, now entombed!* "

He has counted among his friends most of the Parisian celebrities in the world of music and literature, to some of whom he was and is warmly attached. To several of these friendships reference has been made in the preceding pages. When Ambroise Thomas died, Massenet delivered the address at the obsequies. In this address he said:

"It is to me that friends and colleagues of the Société des Auteurs have entrusted the mournful task of glorifying this great and noble artist, when I feel more like weeping. For this grief is deep, particularly in the case of

those of us who were his pupils, to some extent the children of his brain, on whom he lavished his instruction and advice, giving us without stint the best that was in him in this apprenticeship of the language of sounds which he spoke so well. . . .

"In the arts, as in nature, there are impetuous torrents, impatient of all dikes, bringing sometimes ruin and desolation on the land near their banks. There are also rivers of azure tint, which flow on calmly and majestically, enriching the plains they pass through. Ambroise Thomas had this serenity, and this *force assagie*." *

There is in these extracts evidence of sentiment and imagination which makes one regret that Massenet, unlike Berlioz and Saint-Saëns, did not write articles and books as well as operas and songs.

WAGNER AND OTHER MASTERS

The address on Méhul, delivered in 1892, bears witness to Massenet's respect for the old French masters. Two years later *Le Journal* asked the leading composers for their opinion on

* The whole of this discourse is printed in Solenière's book on Massenet. The much longer discourse delivered by him on the occasion of the unveiling of a monument to Méhul may be found in Imbert's *Profiles d'Artistes*, pp. 229–233.

the "mouvement musical"—in other words, it asked them to tell the world what they thought of one another. Massenet extricated himself with the following diplomatic letter:

"Monsieur le Directeur,

"Returning from a railway trip I find your pleasant letter, to which I should like very much to be able to reply in the way you wish me to.

"If you asked me for a melody, I should do my best to satisfy you; but write an article is something I cannot do.

"And besides, what a serious thing it is for a musician who is still in the field to pass judgment on the musical epoch in which he is a combatant!

"It would surely be most ungracious on my part not to pronounce all my colleagues admirable and not to cover them with flowers.

"That is what I do, while sending you the assurance of my most sympathetic sentiments.

"MASSENET."

Of all his contemporaries the one whom Massenet admired most was Richard Wagner. In *Le Figaro* of January 19, 1884, there appeared an interview in which he spoke of Wagner's influence: "This influence on me was at first perhaps a little more than was reasonable, and my liking for the composer of the tetralogy verged

at that time on fanaticism.* To-day, matured by study and experience, I admire him still, but above all as *littérature*. My professor's chair at the Conservatoire has protected me from these excessive enthusiasms. I have charge of young minds that are more ardent, more progressive, more Wagnerian still, as you say, than I was myself, for the world has moved, thank heaven; and it has seemed to me necessary to hold them in check, until after a gradual cultivation of taste, step by step, in accordance with the distinctive characteristics of the French genius, they can risk an excursion into these new worlds, which are full of real charms, but also of misleading mirages."

Imbert relates that one day, in talking with several persons who abused Wagner's music, Massenet turned to another individual and said calmly: "Since you are just back from Bayreuth you will understand this: so overwhelming is the power of Wagner that after hearing one of his works one vows never to compose

* When *Esclarmonde* was produced, the critical wits referred to him as "Mlle. Wagner," and the newspapers related with much zest an anecdote regarding the composer Reyer, who, when he heard that Massenet had exclaimed: "Wagner, a prodigious genius! I shall consider myself fortunate to reach his ankles!" retorted promptly and seriously: "But he is reaching them!"

another thing. Afterward," he added with a sigh, "one forgets a little and begins again."

The opinions of the author of this volume on Massenet's genius are set forth in the following chapters, devoted to his operas. They agree substantially with the estimate of R. A. Streatfeild as expressed in his interesting book, *The Opera:*

"On the one hand, he traces his musical descent from Gounod, whose sensuous charm he has inherited to the full; on the other he has proved himself more susceptible to the influence of Wagner than any other French composer of his generation. The combination is extremely piquant, and it says much for Massenet's individuality that he has contrived to blend such differing elements into a fabric of undeniable beauty."

IV

FIVE MANHATTAN OPERAS

IV

FIVE MANHATTAN OPERAS

THAÏS

WHEN Oscar Hammerstein opened his purse and with American gold—which no prima-donna has ever been known to scorn—induced Mary Garden to leave the scene of her many triumphs—the Opéra-Comique of Paris—that institution appears to have been left, for a time, somewhat in the predicament of the denizens of Walhalla (in Wagner's *Rheingold*) when Freia, the goddess of youth and beauty, was carried off by the giants. It was as a devotee of another Venus, the ancient Alexandrian Aphrodite, that Mary Garden made her American début at the Manhattan Opera House, on November 25, 1908, as Thaïs in Massenet's opera.

Were it not known that Massenet wrote this opera for Sibyl Sanderson, who, in 1894, created the title rôle in Paris, one might readily take it for granted that he conceived it for Mary Garden, for it fits her personality and her art like a glove.

The libretto is based on the well-known novel of Anatole France, from which it was adapted by Louis Gallet. It takes us to Alexandria in the early days of Christian conflict with pagan sensuality, and the story is that of a sinner who became a saint and a saint who became a sinner.

Thaïs, famed as an actress and for her incomparable beauty, has the whole city enthralled. Her profligacy equals her beauty. When the curtain rises we behold a scene on the banks of the Nile, a gathering of the saintly dwellers in the desert, known as the Cenobites. One of their number is Athanaël, who, in his sleep, has a vision (made apparent to the audience) of Thaïs in the theatre, worshipped by the mob of enthusiasts. He resolves to go and save her.

In the next scene we find him on the terrace of the house of a wealthy Alexandrian, Nicias, a former friend of Athanaël, and one of the numerous lovers of Thaïs. She is to come to his house that very day, and the monk allows himself to be decked in fine garments to facilitate access to her presence and consideration. Her attention is at once attracted by the fierce-eyed stranger. He boldly announces that he has come to teach her contempt of the flesh, love of pain, austere penance. The priestess of Venus retorts that she believes but in love, from which no power can swerve

her; but in the next scene, in the house of Thaïs, which Athanaël has boldly entered, she is made serious for once by the monk's reference to the life everlasting. She fears death, she knows beauty is transient. She first tries by her allurements to triumph over Athanaël, and then, awed by his sternness and defiance, succumbs to fear. With the words: "On thy doorstep until dawn, I shall await thy coming," he leaves.

The result of the struggle in her soul during the night is that in the morning she joins him, ready to go with him to the desert. He persuades her to set fire to her house; the mob angrily resents the taking away of their idol, but Nicias throws handfuls of gold on the ground, and while the populace fights over it, the two escape.

We see them in the next scene in an oasis, Thaïs almost dead with fatigue. Athanaël at first urges her on fiercely, but relents on seeing her plight, and refreshes her with fruit and water. The oasis is the home of Albine and her white-garbed nuns. Into their hands he delivers Thaïs, and then returns to his brethren in the desert. But in vain he tries by fasting to get rid of the image of the beautiful woman he has saved. He sees her again in another vision; he hears voices telling him she is dying; he awakes, rushes into the darkness, and finds Thaïs on her death-bed. He

tries to recall her to life, to love, to carnal happiness, but visions of heaven already occupy her mind, and she dies with the words, "I see God."

Undoubtedly, for musical treatment, this is one of the best plots ever borrowed from a novel since Boieldieu first set the example with his *Dame Blanche.* It is a subject, moreover, peculiarly suited to the style of Massenet, with his penchant, which he shared with Gounod, for treating the conflict of worldly with religious emotions.

This story of the courtesan who turned from the god of love to the Love of God was one that enlisted all his sentimental and artistic sympathies, the consequence being that he penned for it some of his most inspired pages.

The most popular of these is the intermezzo entitled Méditation Religieuse.

Operatic audiences have often been accused of paying little or no attention to what the orchestra plays. Once in a while, however, they single out an orchestral prelude or interlude for exceptional and extraordinary applause.

One of these is the Méditation. In response to tumultuous applause, Mr. Campanini had to repeat it not only at the première but at all subsequent performances. It is a solo for violin accompanied by harp and strings—a most graceful

and pleasing melody, simple, sensuous, pensive—a gem of its kind—one of those heart-songs which enchant blasé experts as well as the general public. It symbolises in tones the conversion of Thaïs, having for its poetic content the words she addresses in the morning to Athanaël: "Thy word has remained in my heart as a balm divine—I prayed, I wept. . . . There came into my soul a great light. Having seen the nothingness of all passion, to thee I came as thou commandest."

So beautiful and dramatically expressive a melody as this, was too entrancing to be heard only once or twice. Massenet instinctively used it again in the oasis when Athanaël so evidently has forgotten everything but Thaïs, and once more in the death scene of Thaïs to delineate the last transport of her soul.

Repeated hearings bring out many points of beauty in the *Thaïs* score beside the Méditation and the lovely duo in the oasis (*Baigne d'eau tes mains*) which is the gem of the opera. Atmospherically the music is admirable and follows the plot in all its emotional colour from the characteristic monotony of the Thébaïde pictured by the plaintive chant of the monks, to the scenes of luxury in Alexandria. Against the grey background of the Cenobites' chorus Athanaël's

virile measures, when he determines to go to Alexandria to save Thaïs, stand out in bold outline, but they remain ecclesiastical in character, and so does his parting, heard farther and farther off as he leaves the brethren praying for him in his perilous undertaking.

One of the most fascinating parts of the score is the exotic intermezzo which introduces the scene before Thaïs's house. It is not specifically Egyptian music, such as we have in Verdi's *Aïda*, but Oriental in the wider sense, which includes Russia, and with its persistent hypnotising tambourine beats, its tinkling rhythmic repetition of the same charming melodic figure, it becomes almost mesmeric in its effect, enveloping the hearers in the voluptuous atmosphere of the East and contrasting vividly with Athanaël's stern voice, as he commands Thaïs to destroy every reminder of her past life, even the beautiful ivory statuette of Eros, to which she clings and which calls out his special jealous aversion because it was a gift from Nicias.

Again, without rising to great dramatic heights, the final intermezzo, that of the third act, is finely characteristic of Athanaël's passionate, frantic return to the oasis, the frenzy of his haste, the suffering of the many days he has spent reaching the longed-for goal. After this stormy prelude

comes the peaceful, sad song of the nuns, gathered around the bed of the dying Thaïs, the religious harmonies melting suddenly and beautifully into the frenzied ones of Athanaël's approach.

The rôle of Athanaël seems to have inspired Massenet more even than the title rôle, for to him he has given most of the best music of the opera. One very effective member is "Voila donc la terrible cité," which he sings when he has returned to Alexandria and looks out over its wicked beauty, so emblematic of the woman he has come to save.

The most beautiful music for Thaïs comes after her conversion; and, apart from the duo, its climax is reached in her farewell to Athanaël, a farewell as passionless as his is the opposite. It will be seen that there are few salient musical features, arias and duos appearing only where the situation demands such musical treatment.

The musical climax of the opera is reached in the exquisitely simple, emotional duo which Thaïs and Athanaël sing after reaching the oasis, to which his harshness has unrelentingly driven the delicate woman. Thaïs has forgotten the world and its pleasures, but to Athanaël suddenly comes the awakening, and he has the tender joy of ministering to the needs of the beloved creature

whose feet are bleeding because she has followed him uncomplainingly through the desert. All his compassion, all his tenderness, the exquisite mixture of earthly and heavenly love, sound in the music which accompanies the words, *Baigne d'eau tes mains et tes lèvres.* One never tires of its charming melody and lovely harmonies. It is one of Massenet's purest gems.

Owing to the fear that it might prove monotonous, the scene of Athanaël's confession to Palémon, and his temptation afterward, were omitted in New York, and this made an unfortunate break in the continuity of the story. However, at this point the libretto leaves out, perforce, the most striking part of the book, the terrible description of Athanaël's long struggle to mortify the flesh and regain his peace of mind, and the final complete fall when he curses God and man. Thaïs is dying. Another Cenobite, Paul le Simple, has had the vision, and Athanaël sees nothing else, hears nothing else. Why should the sun, the flowers, the universe exist when she is dying? Like a madman he makes his way to the Nile and takes a boat which for days travels slowly toward the loved one. Sometimes he is in the depths of sorrow, at others he is insane, screaming with agony. The pains of hell would be nothing to him to buy one moment of her

love, and he, fool that he had been, had refused the ecstasy of that love. He had not even the memory of such a moment to carry with him to hell. No wonder his face was that of a vampire from which the holy nuns fled in terror. "He had become so hideous that in passing his hand across his face he could feel its horror." Thus ends the book.

So far as the singers are concerned Thaïs is practically a long duo. Nicias has little to say, although M. Dalmores, who took this small part in the first New York performances, made it as important as it was capable of being made. All the interest centres in the struggle between Thaïs and Athanaël.

It is a pity that the libretto gives no chance to Thaïs to show herself as Anatole France pictures her, a soul longing to find the better side of life, but unable, owing to her surroundings and her great beauty, to struggle out of the mire which holds her fatally. From this point of view her sudden conversion does not seem improbable, as it well might in the opera if Athanaël's part were acted by an artist inferior to Maurice Renaud. He carries the absolute conviction of his power to save, and his hearers are as sure of Athanaël's strength as he is himself.

As Thaïs, the arch-temptress, Miss Garden

made one comprehend the Parisian enthusiasm for her unique personality. Hers is an individuality to be reckoned with. She has beauty of face and still more of form. She is plump, yet slender, she has a feline grace of movement as well as beauty of line, and she does not hide her light under a bushel. To these personal attractions and to the fervour of her acting she owes her fame and popularity. With all her audacity, her enactment of the rôle of the priestess of Venus was free from vulgarity; it was sensual, yet not offensive. Her face lends itself to many shades of expression; and there are not a few places where she revealed the art of a consummate actress. She portrays the part of Thaïs with her whole soul as well as her whole body; and what is more it is when the soul wins the day that she is at her best. The scene where, after a final attempt to triumph over the monk with her physical charms, she throws herself at his feet overawed, weeping and groaning, is one of several in this opera which, thanks to her histrionic art and that of M. Renaud, no one who has seen is likely to forget. Nor can one wonder at the terror she feels of the unknown life the austere monk proposes to her, nor feel surprised at his fear of her, his terror-stricken eyes, his prayer for help when she exerts her powers to the utmost

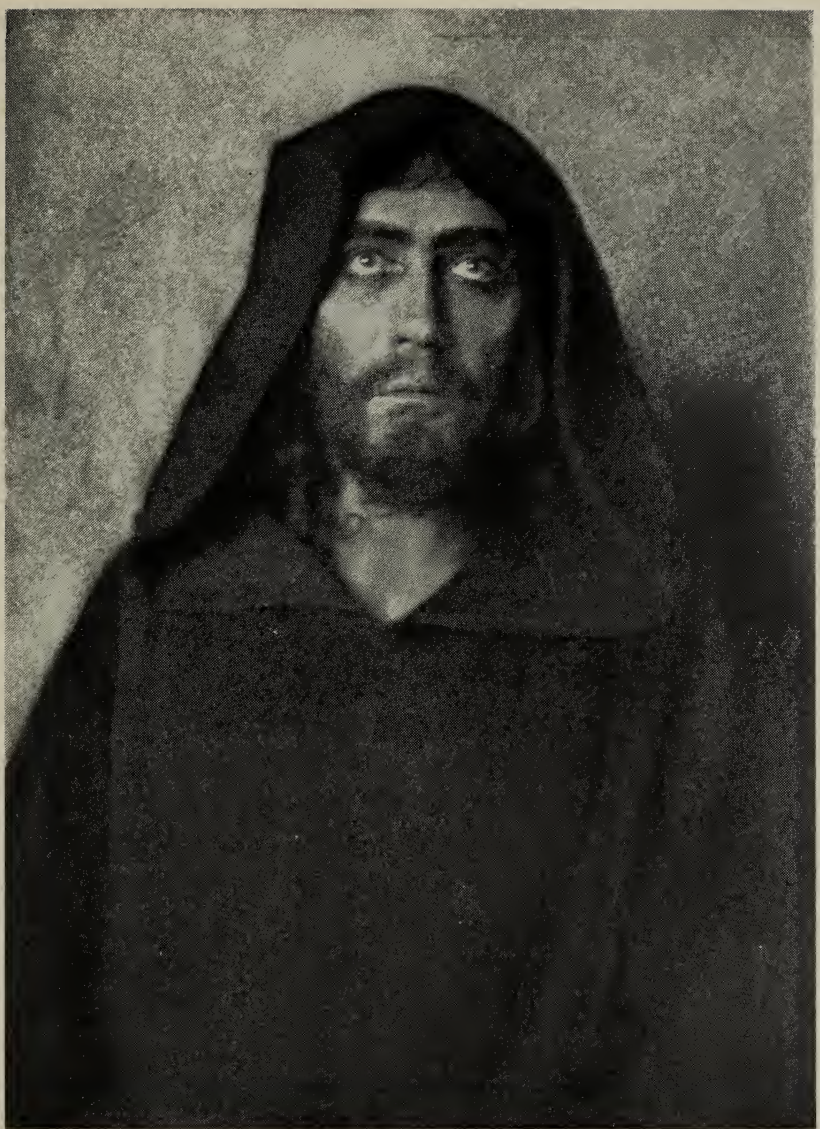
to vanquish him. Wonderfully Miss Garden and M. Renaud played into each other's hands, each inspiring the other.

Were Miss Garden as great a singer as she is an actress, she would have few rivals in the operatic world, past or present, but unfortunately this is not the case. Her higher voice is shrill and acid in quality at times, and not always true; whereas the middle and lower voice are of far finer quality. One note in her Thaïs is always exquisite, and that is the floating, long-drawn-out high *A* which she sings as she leaves Athanaël to go to the convent. However, she has much fervour in her singing, and one may agree with the modern French and German ideas: "Better that fervour with a few flaws than *bel canto* without fervour." Her singing has the dramatic quality—passionate intensity of utterance and emotional realism, and because of these virtues we must overlook the general lack of sensuous beauty.

Though the issue is different, one cannot but feel in not a few places that Massenet, if not his librettist, had in mind memories of *Parsifal*, and there is more than a suggestion in the impersonation of Athanël by M. Renaud. This rôle of Athanaël added one more to the gallery of unforgettable impersonations that M. Renaud has favoured us with. In the early scenes he was

every inch the saint—stern, impulsive for his cause, fanatical in pursuance of his purpose. Every movement of his marvellously beautiful and soulful eyes—and what actor ever had such talking eyes as Renaud has?—was eloquent with spirituality. One needed no book nor spoken words to realise the gradual change of the saint to the sinner in thought, the triumph of the man over the monk. Few of the pictures in Darwin's book on the expression of the emotions illustrate the passions so legibly as this French actor illustrates the change from the austere monk to the sinning man, who, enslaved by carnal charms, ends by imploring the sinner he has converted into a saint to become a sinner again.

One remarkable characteristic of M. Renaud is that when he has seemingly reached perfection he is never satisfied, but continues to elaborate and enrich each rôle with numberless details. It would be impossible to change the part of Athanaël in any marked degree from its general outline, but by many subtle touches, by an added emphasis to one or another of Athanaël's characteristics, Renaud makes the monk sometimes tender, sometimes stern, sometimes more of a man, sometimes more of a saint. Perhaps the finest performances were those where the human



Photograph by E. S. Bennett, N. Y.

MAURICE RENAUD AS ATHANAËL IN "THAÏS"

side was uppermost, the sternness that of a passionate, jealous man rather than that of an ascetic cenobite. Not that he failed to accent Athanaël's real holiness, for his certainty of conquering Thaïs's worse nature and his joy at his victory were always wonderfully expressed in voice and face; but sometimes the struggle to keep in the path of purity was more apparent than at others. One very dramatic moment, one of many, was the intensely repressive way in which he asked Nicias if he knows "cette comédienne, Thaïs." The momentary hesitation at using her name and the tremendous eagerness with which he speaks when the flood-gates are opened, told the whole story. It had in it what Jean de Reszke used to put into the name Isolde, the whole pent-up feeling of a great lover. Thaïs is right when she asks him why he fails to fulfil his destiny, "Homme fait pour aimer."

All through the opera, those who have read Anatole France's book will realize that Renaud follows that more closely than he does the libretto, but it is his return at the end of the opera which makes this most emphatic. When he reappeared to find Thaïs dying, he looked as if he had been through the tortures of the damned. All the many weary days of useless self-punishment, all

the agonies of waiting, longing, all the hope, fear, blasphemy, were indelibly marked in his face with its bloodless lips, waxy color, and burning eyes. Even his outstretched, clutching hands told the story of his intolerable longing, and that hell itself would be Paradise if only she were there. All the beauty of his face was gone—a face which, earlier in the opera, might well have served some of the great Italians as a model for Christ's head—and only the naked, writhing soul appeared to terrify the holy women. Nor is M. Renaud's voice less great than his histrionic gifts. It is full and sonorous, saturated with deep feeling, and he uses it with complete understanding of all its resources. Who will ever forget the expression of intense anguish—what the French call tears in the voice—of his heartbroken "Je ne la verrai plus," an emotional climax which caused Geraldine Farrar on one occasion to burst out in uncontrollable enthusiasm of applause and exclamations of "Wonderful! Superb!" and caused her to say more than once to her companion: "I can't get away from it. It grips my heart."

Lucky Massenet, lucky Anatole France to have their creations thus set forth on the operatic stage!

It was evidently not thus that *Thaïs* was

represented at its première in the Paris Opéra, on March 16, 1894, although the cast included Sibyl Sanderson as Thaïs, Delmas as Athanaël, and Alvarez as Nicias. Or was it that the critics and the public failed to see the beauties of this opera at once, as they failed in the cases of *Faust* and *Carmen?*

At any rate it had twenty-seven representations in 1894, but only four in the following year. Félix Grenier wrote in *Le Journal:* "It is hardly probable that curiosity to see the ballet in the third act of *Thaïs* will suffice to keep this work in the repertory." And Hugues Imbert, who cited this in 1897, added, "his prediction proved correct."

But the attitude of the public gradually changed. In May, 1910, *Thaïs* had its hundredth performance in Paris. In New York it remained the best "draw" in the Manhattan repertory for three seasons, Oscar Hammerstein's sole complaint being that the public ignored other operas, wanting to hear *Thaïs* and always *Thaïs.* Much of this, to be sure, was due to the art and the popularity of Mary Garden, Maurice Renaud, and Charles Dalmores; but the opera itself was better liked after repeated hearing—the supreme test of genuine merit.

LE JONGLEUR DE NOTRE DAME

An opera without violins was written by the French composer, Méhul; he substituted for them violas, because he wanted a sombre atmosphere throughout. The result was adjudged monotonous.

It remained for the gentle, unrevolutionary Massenet to try a still more hazardous experiment —an opera without a prima-donna.

Even Wagner, arch-enemy of the prima-donna operas, never went as far as that. While men do most of the singing in his *Siegfried*, there are, nevertheless, some feminine episodes—the charming song of the Forest Bird, the thrilling warning of Erda, the glorious outpouring of Brünnhilde's voice and soul in the last scene. But in *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* all the rôles are for men —a juggler, a cook, and five monks.

How did Massenet come to write such a singular work?

It was his seventeenth opera. The critics had accused him of harping forever on the same string—the theme of woman, of frail femininity in particular. There were Mary Magdalen and Manon, Esclarmonde, and Thaïs—always the same type.

Inasmuch as Massenet was, as we have seen,

very sensitive to criticisms, one might guess that it was because of these that he made such a radical change, leaving out woman and love altogether. Apparently, however, the new departure was a mere accident.

One day, so the story goes, Massenet went down-stairs to receive from the postman a registered package, his doorkeeper happening to be away. It proved to be a manuscript libretto. Had the concierge been at his post, it is not likely that the composer would ever have seen this MS. Librettos came to him from everywhere unsolicited, for playwrights knew that to be associated with him meant almost certain success; but he had found most of them so unsatisfactory that he had ceased to pay any attention to them.

Fortunately, on this occasion, he had just been packing his valise for a trip to the country. He put the MS. left by the postman in with the other things, read it on the train, and was so fascinated that he promptly communicated with the author, whose name was Maurice Léna.

M. Léna was a professor at the University, known for his scholarship and his habit of delving among mediæval legends. He promptly came to see Massenet, who suggested some slight changes and then accepted the libretto for his next opera.

The plot is based on one of the stories of Anatole France's *L'Étui de Nacre*, which in turn harks back to a mediæval miracle play—one of those legends of monks and marvels which used to be so popular that they had to be enacted in cemeteries and market places because the churches could not hold all who were eager to hear them.*

The curtain rises on a gay scene of fourteenth-century life in the square in front of the Abbey of Cluny. It is a market day in May. Peasants in their stalls are selling vegetables and dairy products; boys and girls dance; a monk calls out that indulgences are for sale at the great altar. Presently cries are heard: "Un jongleur, un jongleur!"

A moment later Jean appears. He is poorly attired and looks starved; some laugh when he announces himself as the king of jugglers. He mentions diverse tricks of his trade wherewith he offers to entertain them, but they will have none of these old things. "Give us rather a drinking song," they exclaim, and approve of his choice of the "Hallelujah of Wine," which he sings with apologies for the "sacrilège chanson,"

* The legend in its original form is related by Gaston Pâris in his *Étude sur la poésie française au Moyen Age* under the title of *Le Tombeor de Nostre Dame.*

but "one must earn one's bread, and if my heart is Christian, why is my belly pagan?"

While he is finishing it the door of the Abbey opens violently and the Prior appears. All escape except Jean. The Prior reprimands and tries to persuade him to abandon his wicked profession and turn monk. "The Virgin will pardon you if, from to-night, you will become my brother in this convent."

Jean is disinclined to give up his free life, but he is very hungry, and when Boniface, the cook, appears opportunely with a donkey laden with vegetables, sausages, poultry, and other things good to eat, not to speak of flasks of wine, his appetite becomes the Prior's ally and he succumbs, joining the monks at the table, after smuggling in his jugglery outfit.

In the second act we find Jean a regular inmate of the monastery. He has grown more portly; his new life seems to agree with him; and yet he is not happy—he is too different from the other monks, all of whom have some specialty to while away time, while he has none. The Musician Monk rehearses his brethren in a motet which he has composed for the feast of the Assumption. Then he and the Painter Monk, the Sculptor Monk, and the Poet Monk get into a dispute as to the relative value of their arts, each

one advising Jean to adopt his art as the best. The Prior ends the dispute and takes them all to the chapel.

Left alone with the cook, who has always shown a kind interest in him, Jean laments that he alone, knowing no Latin and none of the fine arts, has no way of doing homage to the Virgin; but Boniface tries to persuade him that Latin and the fine arts are not a necessity; whoever does his work well, acts meritoriously; "a capon, cooked to a turn, is worth a thousand poems." Then he sings him the legend about Mary and the Infant Jesus, whose life was saved from the pursuers by the humble sageplant, which hid Him in its leaves after the proud rose had refused to do so for fear of spoiling the crimson of her dress.

Thus is Jean taught that the Virgin is not proud; that, in her eyes, the juggler is as good as the artist or king. He makes up his mind to do homage to her in his own way, and in the last act he carries out this plan, going through his various juggler's tricks in front of the image of the Virgin. He is observed by one of the other monks and the Prior is hastily summoned. He arrives with the other monks, who, scandalized by the sacrilege, shout, "Anathema!" "Death to the impious!" while Jean is too much ab-

sorbed in his devotional antics to hear or see anything.

For a time Boniface is able to restrain the monks from interfering. At last their fury reaches such a pitch that they are about to throw themselves on him, when Boniface stops them by pointing at the image of the Virgin. "A miracle!" all exclaim. The statue has begun to shine with a strange light, growing brighter and brighter. The Virgin has come to life; with a smile on her lips she inclines her head lovingly and extends her hands to bless Jean. The voices of angels are heard, chanting "Hosannah! Glory to Jean." The monks, falling on their knees, respond with

Kyrie Eleison,
Christe exaudi nos,
Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis,"

and the juggler, exclaiming: "At last I understand Latin!" falls back dead. Once more the celestial voices are heard and the halo descends from the statue and shimmers over Jean's head.

Be he Catholic or Protestant, agnostic or Hebrew, no one at all capable of feeling emotion can help being thrilled by this last scene, which, in its way, is as impressive as the final tableau in Wagner's *Parsifal.* Poet, composer, and scenic artist have here succeeded in producing a complete illusion, enabling a modern audience to experience

the same ecstatic feelings that swayed the monks who, according to the legend, witnessed that miracle.

To create such an ecstatic feeling, music is necessary—the Church always uses it as an aid; and the fact that Massenet's music here rises to the height of the situation speaks volumes for his genius. The mystic ecstasies of the monastery are expressed by him with a delightful art of creating atmosphere.

Atmosphere seems to be what modern operatic audiences crave above all things. To Debussy's skill in creating it is owing the success of his *Pelléas et Mélisande*. *Parsifal*, which was produced twenty years before *Pelléas*, is intensely atmospheric—one breathes the very air of legend in listening to it; and the same is true of the *Jongleur*, which is equally mediæval and monastic.

This is true not only of the final climax, but of the whole score. In the opening market-scene we are among the populace, and the songs and dances have a popular character, suggesting folk tunes. In other places, too, especially in Jean's songs addressed to the virgin in the last act, old French folk music is used or imitated to heighten the "atmospheric" effects.

Altogether delightful is the second act, in which

Massenet displays his contrapuntal skill and his knowledge of mediæval church music.

It has been the fashion among a certain class of critics to speak condescendingly of Massenet as a man who, no doubt, could toss off a pretty tune when needed, but who was unversed in the deeper mysteries of the art of composition.

The whole score of the *Jongleur*, the second act in particular, proves the incorrectness of this attitude.

As we saw in the Biographic Sketch, he was for eighteen years Professor of Harmony at the Conservatoire, teaching the technic of composition to a number of students who have since become famous. But he was never one of those who aim to astonish the natives by parading their knowledge and technic.

He preferred to learn and practise the art of concealing art, and it is this art that one has occasion to admire on almost every page of this operatic score. While the ordinary opera-goer appreciates it only in a general way, in so far as it helps to create atmosphere, an expert cannot but admire the many subtle touches of contrapuntal skill and ecclesiastic colouring interwoven into the argument between the four monks regarding their arts, and the preceding choral rehearsal. It is much easier to let us *see* the interior of a

mediæval convent than to let us *hear* it; but Massenet has succeeded.

He has succeeded also in the equally difficult art of imparting genuinely humourous and comic touches to his music. Among these may be named the drinking-song, or *Alleluia du Vin*, and Boniface's praise of his viands on the burro's back, besides Jean's songs to the Virgin in the last act in which humour is paired with pathos. Of pathos not allied with comedy there is also plenty, and the composer augments it with his apt harmonies and orchestral colours as he does the humourous episodes and the mysticism which is the key-note of the whole opera.

In a word, this operatic miracle play is a gem. Massenet knew he had created a masterwork. To a journalist he remarked: "I have produced a work into which I have put all the love my heart possesses, all of my faith and tenderness; but a work of pure art, for which I dreamt of a theatre in which I could give free vent to all my artistic aspirations without being hampered by exactions which, also, are natural with a public used to certain formulas."

Le Jongleur de Notre Dame had its first performance in 1892, at Monte Carlo. Two years later the Parisians first heard it, and subsequently it was produced at some of the German opera-

houses. London heard it in 1906. At all of these performances the part of Jean was sung by a light tenor.

Not so when Oscar Hammerstein produced the *Jongleur* at the Manhattan Opera House, on November 27, 1908. He seems to have had his doubts whether an opera without the *ewig Weibliche* in the guise—or, rather, the disguise—of a prima-donna would appeal to the New York public; so Massenet was prevailed upon to alter the part of the Juggler sufficiently to make it possible for Mary Garden to assume it, in male garb; and the sequel proved the wisdom of this proceeding.

Miss Garden succeeded surprisingly in disguising her femininity both in face and form, and the tonsure gave the finishing touch. In the opening scene she enacted the part of the poor, unskilled juggler with many touches of realism that evoked sympathy. There was something specially appealing about her after she had gone into the monastery. She bubbled over with playfulness and yet conveyed to the audience an impression of exquisite youthful reverence. If she had worn a red cloak instead of a white one she would have looked completely like Abbey's "Sir Galahad," especially in the picture where Galahad fails to ask the question. Miss Garden's eyes had this lovely,

innocent, wondering look in them, especially when M. Renaud was telling her the story of the Christ-baby being hidden from his pursuers in the flowering sage. Her singing was at first strident and above pitch, but it improved gradually, and at the end of the second act she sang the "Vierge mère d'amour" with a vocal beauty and a vocal art altogether delightful.

As to Maurice Renaud, he added another striking picture to his operatic gallery. Who could have imagined that the jolly, fat, red-faced Boniface, with kindly eyes, the friendliest smile, and a passion for making fine nougats and creams, could be the same man as the wicked Scarpia in *Tosca*, as the fanatical Athanaël in *Thaïs?* His unctuous praise of the old Macon wine, his funny change from the reverence of the Benedicite to the more important matter of dining, brought laughter from the whole house, as did also his earnest preparing of vegetables in the second act. The high-water mark of the evening was reached, however, in the exquisite narrative of the sage brush opening to hide the Christ-child. Here M. Renaud's eyes were a study of tenderness, human and divine, and his smile when the Child was safe illuminated his homely face to a kind of unearthly beauty. His vocal interpretation of the music had the same charm as his acting—

CHARLES GILIBERT
AS BONIFACE IN "LE JONGLEUR DE NOTRE DAME"

the charm of mirroring the text at every moment.

At two of the subsequent performances the part of Boniface was taken by Charles Gilibert, a true artist who often accepts minor rôles when he is quite able to do justice to the major ones. The opera was sung seven times during the season of 1908–9, and five times during 1909–10. At the last performance Mr. Hammerstein made an unfortunate but interesting experiment. Most of the newspaper critics had complained that by assigning the part of Jean to a disguised woman, the manager had, to some extent, marred the spirit of Massenet's opera. Accordingly, on this occasion, the excellent young tenor, M. Devries, was asked to impersonate Jean, while M. Duffranne appeared as Boniface.

The result was that, whereas the opera had always drawn a crowded house when given with the original cast, on this occasion *Cavalleria Rusticana* had to be added to the bill to draw an audience, the advance sale having been surprisingly small. The public having, for two seasons, always associated Jean with Mary Garden, refused to have anyone else in the part. And the public was led by a correct instinct. While the old custom of assigning such rôles as Orpheus (Gluck), and Romeo (Bellini) to women was

ridiculous, the same adjective does not apply to this case. The Juggler, to be sure, is a man, but he is not at all manly in any of his acts. In his passivity, his appeal to one's sympathies, his dependence on Boniface, he is really feminine, and this aspect of the character makes it more of a part for a woman. Mary Garden succeeded in disguising her femininity—which is so pronounced and alluring in Thaïs and other rôles—in a most amazing manner; yet there remained an ineradicable residuum of herself which was just what the part calls for.*

HÉRODIADE

After the monstrous, degenerate, mentally-diseased Salome imagined by Oscar Wilde and set to music by Richard Strauss, it was a relief for sane opera-goers in New York to make the acquaintance of a more human Salome, a Salome who, instead of demanding the death of John the Baptist and gloating necrophilistically over his severed head, loves him with a maiden love and stabs herself when she hears he has been executed

* See the remarks on Mary Garden's assumption of the part of a youth in another of Massenet's operas—*Chérubin*—in the pages devoted to it. The librettist objected, but Massenet would have it so.

by order of her mother, Herodias. This is the Salome of Massenet's opera *Hérodiade*, which had its first American performance at the Manhattan Opera House, on November 8, 1909.

The story of this opera is not only characteristically Parisian, but obviously made to fit Massenet's peculiar cast of thought. The personages are Oriental, but only for the sake of local colour; and their sentiments, as well as the beautiful airs they sing, are modern French. Yet, thanks to the splendours of grand opera, scenic, processional, and saltatorial, one enjoys the feeling of having made a trip to Palestine.

Jerusalem is the scene of the opera, Herod's palace its opening picture. In London, where this opera was produced in 1904, under the name of *Salome*, the story was transferred to Ethiopia by order of the censor. Yet there is nothing in it to offend even those who do not believe in bringing Biblical personages and tales on the stage, for Massenet's librettists concocted for him a plot which deviates entirely from the account of the episode of Herod, Herodias, her daughter, and St. John, given in the Gospel of St. Mark, and followed in the Wilde-Strauss opera.

In Massenet's opera, Salome does not know that she is the daughter of Herodias, from whom she was mysteriously separated in childhood. In

the first act, we see her on her incessant search for her mother, which has brought her to Jerusalem with a caravan of Jewish merchants, carrying gifts to Herod. She tells her troubles to a young astrologer named Phanuel, who knows her parentage, but for operatic reasons does not reveal it. She declares she will go back to the Prophet, who had befriended her in the desert and away from whom, she feels, she can no longer live.

As she departs, Herod comes on the stage. Though he had but caught a glimpse of Salome, he is madly in love with her, and feverishly calls upon her to return. Instead of Salome, Herodias comes in hastily, pale and excited, asking the King to avenge her on John, who had publicly insulted her, calling her Jezebel. She demands his head, but Herod refuses because of John's popularity and power.

John appears and again denounces her, till the royal couple flee from his maledictions. Salome returns and falls at John's feet, confessing her love for him, and him alone. "The gloom of my life is not for one so young and beautiful as you," he answers, "but if love you must, love me as one loves in a dream."

Surrounded by Nubian, Greek, and Babylonian slave girls, Herod in vain seeks distraction in their songs and dances, from the one thought which

haunts him, the thought of Salome. A love-potion gives him a vision of her, vivid as reality, and he raves deliriously till he sinks exhausted on his couch. This scene inspired the famous *Vision fugitive*, which is as beautiful in its way as Salome's exquisite aria. [Phanuel enters and chides him for lying there, filled with delirious thoughts of a woman when all about there is danger of revolt and bloodshed. "The people tremble before you, but it is John they acclaim." Herod answers boastfully he will first chase away the Romans and then get rid of the prophet.] Meanwhile, in the great square at Jerusalem, commanding a view of Solomon's Temple on Mount Moriah, are assembled priests, sailors, soldiers, merchants, and Arabian envoys and chieftains to greet Herod, and to promise their support in a holy war against the Romans; but when, presently, fanfares are heard, and the Romans, Vitellius at their head, come marching into the square, all avert their eyes and try to conceal their feelings. Vitellius is conciliatory, and makes promises of reforms, which are acclaimed.

At night Herodias, whose jealousy has been aroused by the King's infatuation for Salome, visits Phanuel and begs him to read in the stars her fate and that of her rival. He tells her he has often seen her star obscured by another star.

Even now there is one—but it disappears. "Yours alone remains—ah! and blood-stained it looks." Then he takes her to an opening at the back of his room and shows her a woman approaching the temple: "Your child, there, see! entering the temple!" But with a cry of rage Herodias retorts: "She! my rival! no, no, my daughter is dead." "You are but a woman—a mother, never," replies the astrologer.

Festal songs fill the air the following day as Salome enters the Temple, scarcely able to stand. John, she knows, has been seized and put in chains. "Assassins!" she exclaims; "if he must die, I will die, too." Herod enters, recognizes her, and offers her his love, but she repulses him with horror: "I love another, who is mightier than Cæsar, stronger than any hero!" "You shall both be delivered into the hands of the executioner!" is the King's threat.

The people are now coming into the Temple. The Holy of Holies is revealed; there is a sacred dance. John is led in by the guards. The priests and Herodias demand his death, but Herod refuses until suddenly Salome comes and throws herself at John's feet, asking to share his fate; whereupon both are condemned.

We see John next in a dungeon in the Temple. Salome appears, and for a moment the prophet

falters, thinks he may breathe the perfume of this flower, to murmur: "I love you"; but voices are heard shouting, "Death to the prophet!" and he bids her flee the dungeon. But she declares she will die with him, and as he clasps her in his arms priests and slaves appear to take him to his execution, and her to the palace, by order of the King.

In the last scene, which is in the palace of Vitellius, Salome breaks away from the slaves and implores Herodias to save John. Herodias seems on the point of yielding when the executioner is seen in the background with a blood-stained sword. With the words: "He is slain by your hands! You shall die, too!" Salome draws a dagger and throws herself at Herodias, who cries in terror: "Have pity! I am your mother!" "Then take back your blood and my life," exclaims Salome, thrusting the dagger into her own heart.

Whatever one may think of such a story it cannot be denied that to the purposes of spectacular opera it is excellently suited. The average opera-goer—and it is for him that opera is given chiefly—likes to see scenic backgrounds of historic interest, processions, and dances, and hear love airs and duos, and pleasing instrumental interludes; and of such is Massenet's opera com-

pounded. And it must be said that Mr. Hammerstein, and his stage-manager, Mr. Coini, and the scene painters once more distinguished themselves in the staging of these operatic splendours. The pageantry of the last act was equal to the most spectacular scene in *Aïda* which was obviously Massenet's model; and the various dances of slaves from Egypt, Babylon, Gaul, and Phenicia were picturesquely varied.

Hérodiade is more in the style of grand opera than most of Massenet's other works, and among its musical numbers there are some gems. The tribal dissensions in the first scene may be less realistic than the altercations of the Jews in Strauss's *Salome,* but they are more musical; and after all, in an opera, it is better that the realism should suffer than the music. Realistic as well as musical is the wonderful air of Salome in this same scene—the "Il est doux, il est bon," which thousands have sung and enjoyed who, not knowing even the name of the opera, supposed it to be simply one of the most exquisitely melodious and tender songs ever written in France or elsewhere.

There was a time when a single air like this could win success for an opera. We demand more, and fortunately there is more—much more —in *Hérodiade.* There are some, indeed, who

think that, on the whole, this opera has greater musical interest even than *Thaïs;* and though it is a much less mature work, having been composed as long ago as 1878, it betrays an inborn power for suiting music dramatically to the text. There are not a few numbers like "Ce que je veux" in the first act in which there is *plus de volonté que d'inspiration;* yet the final ensemble of this scene is very effective.

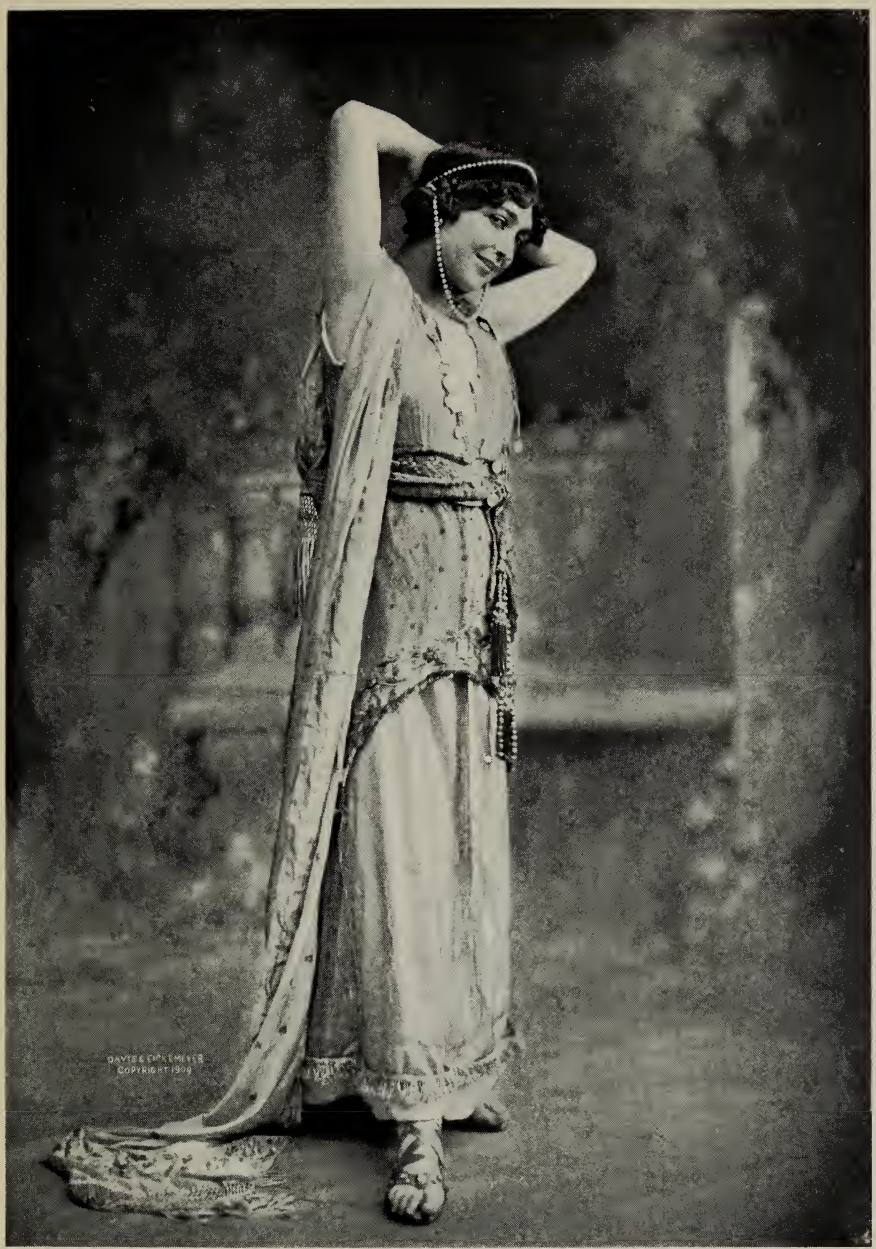
That Massenet was a young man when he wrote this music is obvious from various echoes of the masters he most admired. First among these was Wagner. In the second act, Herod's drinking of the love philter, and casting away of the cup, suggested almost inevitably some vague *Tristan* strains. The trumpet fanfares, announcing the coming of the Romans, are decidedly *Lohengrinish ;* and the second act of the same opera is vividly recalled by the music Massenet wrote for the seventh scene of his second act, when John and Salome appear, followed by the Canaanite women. There are splendidly constructed choruses in this scene, and the finale is grandly impressive.

The scene between Herod and Phanuel, placed within brackets in the preceding synopsis, was omitted in New York in accordance with Massenet's own directions, who felt that it was too

political for opera. On the other hand, the composer added, when the opera was produced in Paris, the episode in which Phanuel consults the planets for the Queen; and this, therefore, represents a later phase of his development; yet it is one of the less interesting parts of the opera. The march of scene eleven is stirring, and admirable also is the responsive chorus, "Schemah Israel! Adonaï Eloheinou." Nothing could be more dainty and charming than the dance of the daughters of Menahim, accompanied by the soft, pretty tinkling of the sistrums. Most pleasing also are the several dances in the last act. No one will be annoyed because the dungeon scene and the gorgeous spectacle on the stage, with brass band and all, suggest *Aïda*. It is only a suggestion, Massenet holds his own, and brings the opera to a brilliant close.

The New York cast included in the principal parts, Lina Cavalieri, Mme. Gerville-Réache, Charles Dalmores, and Maurice Renaud: an excellent ensemble in which the baritone, however, was most conspicuous.

If Massenet had written *Hérodiade* to order for Renaud he would no doubt have given him the rôle of John the Baptist, which suggests Athanaël faintly, but it is as well that he did not do so, since Renaud might perhaps have found



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LINA CAVALIERI AS SALOME IN "HÉRODIADE"

a second Athanaël rather monotonous, and the part of Herod gave him different possibilities to work with. Herod calls himself the chief of a tribe, but he looks every inch a Cæsar, commanding, tyrannical, superb; and yet the fragile Salome repulses him, holds him off through her purity and her love for another man. Renaud was intensely the lover, but still more intensely the tyrant, even when he pleaded for Salome's love. Over all this is thrown the delicate suggestion of mental and bodily ailing, not extreme, never repulsive, but always present, a prophecy of future destruction. The audience was absorbed by the expression of that wonderful face, from his first look of love for Salome, the indescribable boredom which follows when Herodias appears, the almost insane ecstasy of his vision after drinking the potion, his baffled passion and jealousy when he discovers Salome's love for John, and a thousand others, the climax being his despair as he clasps the dead Salome in his arms. His voice fitted his ideal of the part.

It has been stated that *Hérodiade* was originally intended for an Italian audience; that it was the Milanese publisher, Ricordi, who, after reading Gustave Flaubert's novelette, *Hérodias*, asked Massenet to write an opera on this subject; that difficulties in making up a satisfactory cast caused

the composer, however, to offer his opera to the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels.

Quite a different story is told by Louis Schneider, who got it from the librettist, Paul Milliet. According to this version it was Massenet's Parisian publisher, Georges Hartmann, who suggested the use of Flaubert's tale for operatic purposes and asked Milliet to write the "book." When it was completed, he joined Massenet and Hartmann in an excursion to Milan, where Massenet's *Le Roi de Lahore* was about to be produced at the Scala, with the eminent French baritone, Lassalle. One of their objects in visiting Milan was to read the new *Hérodiade* libretto to the publisher, Ricordi, who ruled the destinies of the Scala. Ricordi liked it, and promised to produce its musical setting in Milan simultaneously with its first performance in Paris. For this purpose he had it translated into Italian by a man named Zamadini, whose name is printed as one of the three librettists. The other name, Grémont is a pseudonym of Hartmann.

It took the composer two years and a half to write the score. When it was completed, in 1880, he offered it to Vacorbeil, the director of the Paris Opéra, who, however, was too busy with Gounod's *Tribut de Zamora* and Ambroise Thomas's *Françoise de Rimini* to care for it at that time.

Photograph by Paul Berger, Paris

RENAUD AS HÉROD

Massenet did not wish to wait, so he accepted an offer from the managers of the Brussels Opera to produce it at once. It was staged and rehearsed in a short time, and when the day of the première came, so many Parisians—more than four hundred—travelled to Brussels that the train had to be despatched in two sections.

The performance was a brilliant success, and the composer got an ovation such as the oldest Belgians did not remember at the Théâtre de la Monnaie. The date was December 17, 1881.

It took *Hérodiade* three years to reach Paris. There it was produced on February 1, 1884, with Jean de Reszke as Jean, Edouard de Reszke as Phanuel, Victor Maurel as Hérode, Tremelli as Hérodiade, Fidès-Devriès as Salome, Villani as Vitellius. At the twentieth performance there were three De Reszkes on the bill—Josephine as Salome, besides the two brothers. These representations were given in Italian, at the Théâtre-Italien. When the opera was revived in 1903, at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, Emma Calvé appeared for the first time as Salome, and Maurice Renaud as Hérode.*

* Hamburg heard *Hérodiade* in 1883, under the composer's own direction, the cast including Rosa Sucher, Krauss, and Hermann Winkelmann.

The first French city to hear the opera was Nantes. Here, too, the composer got an ovation, followed by an orchestral serenade. A garland of gold was handed to him with the inscription: "To Massenet, from the vocal artists and the orchestra—Nantes, March 29, 1883." In response to an address, Massenet said: "I wrote *Hérodiade* in the hope of seeing it performed in Paris. Brussels, Hamburg, Milan have so far received it hospitably. I am also glad to see my work return to France and have its first performance therein at Nantes. I hope Paris will be willing some day to indorse the applause you have lavished on it this evening, and for which I am sincerely grateful to you."

As compared with the *Salome* of Oscar Wilde and Richard Strauss, *Hérodiade* seems absolutely innocuous; but *Salome* did not exist for comparison at that time, and so Saint-Saëns, in writing about *Hérodiade* in the *Voltaire*, in 1881, referred to "ce type étrange de puberté lascive et d'inconsciente cruauté qui a nom Salomé, fleur de mal éclose dans l'ombre du temple, énigmatique et fascinatrice!" And when the opera was produced at Lyons, shortly after Nantes, the Archbishop, Cardinal Caverot was so scandalized that he called the Pope's attention to this sacrilegious work and succeeded in obtaining

the minor excommunication of Massenet and Milliet. Thanks to this—and its merits—*Hérodiade* had half a hundred performances in one season.

Victor Maurel * was the director of the Théâtre-Italien as well as the Hérode in the cast when this opera had its Parisian première in 1884, so that he was able to produce the opera in accordance with his own ideas of stage management. In a conversation I had with him in 1910, he referred to this opera as Massenet's *Aïda*, Verdi's master-work having evidently stood model for it. He looked most picturesque as he described—and more or less acted—Hérode's part, particularly his great longing. In the *Vision Fugitive* scene he had the stage made very dark, he said, the lights being distributed so as to emphasize the gloom; and the slave girls were grouped as if they formed part of the stage decorations, rather than with any idea of ballet or beautifying effect.

Concerning Jean de Reszke, who was then at the beginning of his career, M. Maurel also told me some interesting details. He himself

* Concerning M. Maurel's importance in the development of musico-dramatic art (he was the favorite of Verdi in his ripest period) see the pages on him in my *Success in Music and How it is Won.*

foresaw the Polish tenor's future greatness, but Massenet did not, and was with difficulty persuaded to approve of his engagement. He tried in every way to make Maurel give him up, sending influential friends to argue with him; but Maurel's invariable answer was that if *Hérodiade* was to be given under his direction, Jean should be the Jean of the cast and no one else. He himself was, however, somewhat worried in spite of his faith in Jean, who gave the composer occasion for a running fire of criticism at the rehearsals. Maurel explained to Jean that he must learn to hear himself in the auditorium, that he must throw out his voice into space; he encouraged him, praised what was good, and on the evening of the performance Jean made good in every way; the audience liked his voice and his art; it was charmed by his personality and thenceforth his career was assured.

SAPHO

When a composer writes as many operas as Massenet has written—twenty-two in forty-three years—one can hardly expect him to be at his best in all of them. Gounod was a true genius, but of his dozen operas, only two have survived him. Verdi's operatic career shows a curious inter-

LINA CAVALIERI AS SALOME IN "HÉRODIADE"

mingling of successes and failures, with the failures predominating; and the same may be said of Rossini, Donizetti—in fact, of most opera composers, a conspicuous exception being Wagner who struck twelve—or at least eleven—in all of his works, after *Rienzi*.

Sapho is not one of Massenet's successes. In New York it was a complete failure. At its first production in Paris (Opéra-Comique, November 27, 1897), it had a more favourable reception; yet the composer seems to have realised that its fate was dependent on the art and the popularity of the artist for whom he had written the opera—Emma Calvé; "hors de Mlle. Calvé, pas de *Sapho* possible, aux yeux du compositeur," wrote Adolphe Jullien; adding: "Le fait est que c'est une vaillante protagoniste." But even this fascinating artist could not give *Sapho* the vogue of some of the other Massenet operas.

The choice of a libretto based on Daudet's notorious novel, was a mistake, to begin with. When Daudet launched that novel, he dedicated it "To my sons when they are twenty years old." They were to learn from it what a deplorable future a young man prepares for himself when he enters into relations with the demi-monde.

Sapho is an artist's model with a past. She ensnares an unsophisticated youth from the

provinces, Jean Gaussin, and wrecks his affection in attempting to rise above her former life.

The novelist's treatment of this theme has literary merit; as a play it has moments of interest; as set to music it is tiresome.

Daudet complimented the librettists, Henri Cain and Arthur Bernède, on their arrangement which, he said, contained the substance of his book—"livre tout entier"; but the French do not always allow truthfulness to interfere with politeness.

As for Massenet, he decidedly nodded when he wrote this music. In vain one listens throughout the evening for one of those exquisite airs he knows how to write for the voice, or for an enchanting orchestral interlude like the "Méditation" in *Thaïs*. There are some effective, passionate climaxes, and the music adapts itself to the lines and the moods; in these respects, and in the subtle treatment of the orchestra, Massenet is, as always, a master; but there is a lack of inspiration, and the final outcome is oppressive monotony.

The joys and sorrows of courtesans and their companions do not move a normal person's feelings deeply, and while one could not but marvel at the histrionic art Mary Garden lavished on the title rôle when *Sapho* had its New York première

(on November 17, 1909), one could not help regretting that it was not devoted to a more agreeable subject.

There was a note of coarseness, also, in some of the early scenes, which one does not necessarily associate with a model who infatuates artists. One of the critics remarked that "when she is unmasked to her lover in the second act, she turns upon her artist friends with the shrill violence of a Billingsgate fishwife." But in this she seems to have followed traditions; for Adolphe Jullien, in his account of the Parisian première, wrote: "Mlle. Emma Calvé, c'est le cri général, joue et chante avec une ardeur presque excessive le personnage de Sapho, très-difficile à faire accepter à l'Opéra-Comique, en passant de la langueur la plus lascive à la violence la plus grossière, par exemple quand elle injurie ses anciens amants qui viennent de dévoiler son passé au malheureux Gaussin."

Emma Calvé's associates at the Opéra-Comique were Mmes. Wyns and Giraudon, MM. Leprestre (Jean), Nohel, Gresse, Jacquet, Dufour. Mary Garden's associates at the Manhattan were Mmes. D'Alvarez and Villa, MM. Dalmores, Dufranne, Huberdeau, Leroux. Only three performances were given in New York. In Paris, when *Sapho* was revived at the Opéra-Comique,

in 1908, the plot was strengthened by the interpolation of an act following Jean's discovery of Sapho's character.

GRISÉLIDIS

Oscar Hammerstein, who proved that it pays to produce new operas in New York, provided you choose the right operas and give them in the right way, gave the patrons of the Manhattan an opportunity, on January 19, 1910, to witness the first production in America of Massenet's *Griséli-dis*. He was so fortunate as to be able to avail himself of the services of two of the singers, MM. Dufranne and Huberdeau, who appeared at the original production of this opera in Paris on November 20, 1901. He was more fortunate still in having Mary Garden to impersonate the title rôle, and Charles Dalmores, a tenor with brains as well as a voice, in the part of Alain, the shepherd.

Of the Massenet operas known in New York, none became more popular than *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, the opera which immediately preceded *Grisélidis*. Its vogue was, of course, due largely to the entrancing art of Mary Garden and Maurice Renaud; but Massenet's music is not to be overlooked, nor the story the opera is based

on—the mediæval miracle-play, in which the image of the Virgin comes to life and blesses the humble juggler.

Miracle-plays of a primitive sort were much in vogue in the middle ages, beginning with the eighth century. They were at first given in the churches, but became so popular that these could no longer hold the spectators; wherefore they were played in the market-places and cemeteries. The number of actors in them rose at times to a hundred or more. In course of time the worldly element in them became more and more prominent, and there was much buffoonery; the devil, for instance, being introduced as one of the characters, and treated as a sort of clown or scapegoat. Sometimes there were as many as four devils on the stage, with tails, horns, and other satanic attributes. Nor did the priests seem to object to such buffoonery in religious places. On the contrary, they sometimes took a prominent part in it; for instance, in what was known as the Feast of Asses, in commemoration of the flight of Joseph and Mary from Egypt. A beautiful maiden with a child in her arms was placed on a donkey and taken into church, where a priest intoned a song and then brayed like a burro. The congregation then took up this heehaw, repeating it enthusiastically.

Grisélidis is of the order of these mediæval miracle-plays, in which things mundane, celestial, and diabolical are commingled quaintly and continuously. Riemann, in his *Opern-Handbuch*, refers to more than a dozen operas based on the story of Griselda, the beautiful peasant girl, who is put to such cruel tests of her fidelity—a story first told by Boccaccio. Massenet's librettists, Armand Silvestre and Eugène Morand, treated the tale freely, colouring it after the manner of fourteenth-century mysteries, and thus providing Massenet an opportunlty to indulge his mystic proclivities.

In the prologue to his opera, everything is mystic and mysterious. The scene is supposed to be in southern France, but the forest, with its slender trees and its pond adorned with large water-lilies, suggests a remote, semi-tropical region. The shepherd Alain sings his love of Grisélidis with pastoral passionateness. That maiden is shrouded in an air of mystery, like Mélisande; who she is, whence she came, the spectator knows no more than Elsa knew about the identity of Lohengrin. The Marquis de Saluces catches a glimpse of her as she moves in the forest gloom. She is the angel of his dreams; she must be his wife. And she, coming forward, meekly accepts his offer: it is the will of God.

So he takes her away to be his bride, and poor Alain remains alone to utter his despair.

After a few years of happy married life the Marquis is summoned to war against the Saracens. He has no fear for his wife and their son; but the prior suggests the wisdom of not letting them stir from the gates during his absence. He resents this; so great is his confidence in Grisélidis that should the Devil himself appear, he would reiterate his belief in the fidelity and obedience of his wife. The Devil does appear at this very moment; he comes in through the window—the real horned Devil of the miracle-plays, wearing in the first scene a hide so cut that it gives the semblance of a tail. The prior is alarmed at this intrusion, but the Marquis defies the fiend to do his worst, and gives him his wedding ring as a pledge, feeling sure that nothing can swerve Grisélidis.

The Devil has troubles of his own. He has a wife, Fiamina, who is coquettish and wicked, and who, in the next scene, gives an exhibition of her temper. She consents, however, to co-operate with her spouse to win the wager with the Marquis. Disguised as a Byzantine merchant and a Persian slave girl, they call on Grisélidis. The slave girl, the Devil tells her, has been sent by the Marquis (whose ring he shows), to be installed in her place. Meekly Grisélidis obeys, and the Devil is foiled

for the moment; but he has stronger agencies at his command. In the sombre woods, making cabalistic signs, he summons the spirits of evil to bring the shepherd Alain into the garden to make love to Grisélidis. She seems on the point of yielding when her son comes and saves her. The Devil, enraged, carries off the boy.

Later he reappears in her oratory and tells her that a pirate has her son, who will be hanged or sold as a slave unless she gives the pirate a kiss to release him. Seizing a dagger she starts for the ship. At this moment the Marquis has returned from the Holy Land. The Devil points at his wife hurrying toward the ship, but the Marquis disbelieves his insinuations. Grisélidis returns, there is a tender reunion, but she has not found the boy. He is restored by a miracle. The triptych in the oratory opens, and there, in front of the saintly image, flooded with light, is the child.

It cannot be denied that some of the details of the last part of this story are as artificial and foolish as the old Greek romances of Heliodorus and Longus, of which they are an echo. But that does not prevent the story from being, on the whole, admirably adapted to operatic purposes. It takes us into those supernatural realms which Wagner tried so hard to prove are the only proper ones for the music drama. Massenet has shown

in his *Thaïs* and his *Manon* that ancient and modern romances without supernatural occurrences also lend themselves well to his music; yet there is a unique charm about his mediæval miracle-operas.

There are not a few dull moments in *Grisélidis*, as in most operas; but these are atoned for by the more inspired episodes, and there are scenes that must interest the most blasé opera-goer. The miracle in the oratory is a splendid operatic climax. The audience was also pleased particularly with the invocation scene, which was probably suggested by Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust*, but is different, and even more impressive. As the Devil, in the forest, summons the evil spirits, they appear in mysterious gloom, their garments now dark, now glowing in various electric colours.

Musically, this episode is one of Massenet's masterpieces. Each line of the Devil's incantation is answered by an unseen choir, echoing it in varied, lovely harmonies. It is an original conceit, this echo is, and the composer has made the most of it. It is a peculiarity of this opera, by the way, that, while the chorus supplies some of the most beautiful music, it is always invisible. The least interesting part of the opera is the first act; the leave-taking is frankly tiresome, till the trumpet fanfares summon to war. Apart from the

choral strains in the several acts, the best music is in the last part. There are no numbers similar to the two popular airs in *Hérodiade* that are likely to be sung in concert halls; but there is much exquisite detail in the voice parts, and more still in the orchestral score, which, moreover, always preserves the mood and atmosphere of the play in the most artistic manner. A French critic compares the score to Venetian glass. It is, says M. Schneider, "une partition diaphane comme ces verres de Venise dont la coloration a l'air de larmes pleurées le long de leurs contours."

The name given to this opera on the score is "Conte Lyrique en Trois Actes, Avec un Prologue."

Opera-goers of the fashionable persuasion bear Verdi a grudge because the best tenor air in *Aïda* occurs shortly after the opera opens, and before they are in their seats. *Grisélidis* resembles *Aïda* from that point of view. M. Dalmores, as Alain, opened it with "Ouvrez-vous sur mon front," the most sustained and impassioned melody in the whole opera. He sang it splendidly, and also made a vivid impression in the temptation scene in the garden. M. Dufranne was more satisfactory as the Marquis than he has been in any other rôle, while M. Huberdeau who, in Paris, had sung the minor part of Gondebaud,

was at the New York performances advanced to the dignity of being Le Diable himself—a picturesque, good-natured sort of a devil, on the whole, as the story wants him. The minor parts were impersonated by Mmes. Walter-Villa and Duchene, MM. Villa and Scott.

Mary Garden, as a matter of course, was the centre of attraction. It seems hardly credible that the same woman who acted Sapho with such coarse abandon should be, in mien and every gesture, the demure, obedient, chaste, domestic, adoring wife and mother of this play. In the prologue, in particular, she gave the part a shadowy, evanescent, unworldly aspect which was pleasing, even though it may have differed from the conception of the librettists and the poet. Vocally, Miss Garden was at her best. Mr. De la Fuente conducted.

At the première in Paris—at the Opéra-Comique—André Messager was the conductor, and the cast:

Le Diable	MM. Fugère.
Alain	Maréchal.
Le Marquis	Dufranne.
Le Prieur	Jacquin.
Gondebaud	Huberdeau.
Grisélidis	Mmes. Lucienne Bréval.
Fiamina	Tiphaine
Bertrade	Daffetye.
Loys	La Petite Suzanne.

V

FOUR METROPOLITAN OPERAS

V

FOUR METROPOLITAN OPERAS

MANON

FOR generations, one of the favourite story books of the French people was the *Histoire de Manon Lescaut et du Chevalier Des Grieux*, by the Abbé Prevost d'Exiles, who died in 1763. Three of the most eminent French composers, besides the Irish Balfe (1836) and the Italian Puccini, wrote music for it. In 1830, Halévy made it the basis of a ballet for the Paris Opéra. Twenty-six years later Auber, then in his seventy-fourth year, brought out a *Manon Lescaut* opera, which had considerable success in Paris and was admired greatly, among others by Charles Dickens, especially because of its "laughing song," "C'est l'histoire amoureuse."

It remained for Massenet, however, to produce an opera which had sufficient charm to make its way to other countries and which was destined to be generally acclaimed as a master-work of

its kind. His *Manon* had its first performance at the Opéra-Comique in Paris on January 19, 1884, and it cannot be said that Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, which was given to the world nine years later, has ousted it from the first place, musically speaking.

Dumas had the Abbé Prevost's story in mind when he wrote his *Dame aux Camélias*, the popular play, which served as a basis for Verdi's *La Traviata*. Manon is the same kind of a girl as Violetta in that opera—shallow, fickle, pleasure-loving, vain, absolutely without conscience or moral principles. Her family, having come to the conclusion that the best place for her would be a convent, are sending her to one in charge of her cousin, Lescaut, a guardsman. She arrives by stage at an inn at Amiens, where she witnesses in a pavilion three elegantly attired girls feasting with several men, among them the wealthy de Brétigny. The sight impresses her greatly. "How delightful it must be to spend your whole life in pleasure!" she exclaims, as she thinks ruefully of the convent she is destined for.

Hardly has she uttered these words when she perceives a handsome young man approaching. He sees and promptly addresses her, asks her name, and declares his love at first sight. She tells him she is not wicked, but has been told

often at home that she loves pleasure too much and is therefore being sent to a convent. He cannot believe that so much beauty is to be buried alive, and passionately offers to rescue her. The opportunity presents itself at that very moment; the carriage belonging to one of the revellers—who had tried to make love to Manon—is ready to depart. "Let us get revenge by escaping in it," she herself suggests, and promptly the elopement is effected.

The lover is the Chevalier Des Grieux. He takes Manon to his apartments in Paris in the Rue Vivienne. When the curtain rises on the next act she discovers him writing a letter. She looks over his shoulder, and he reads what he has written. It is a letter to his father, in praise of Manon and begging him to give his consent to their marriage. Getting up to post the letter he hears knocking and voices. Manon's cousin enters, followed by de Brétigny. Lescaut asks Des Grieux if he is going to marry his cousin. and Des Grieux replies by taking him aside to show him the letter he has just written to his father. This gives de Brétigny a chance to speak to Manon alone. He tells her that her lover will be carried off that very night by order of his father. "I shall prevent it!" she exclaims; but he answers: "If you do, poverty will be

your lot; if you do not, fortune awaits you." She understands, and again her love of pleasure carries the day. When she is alone with Des Grieux in the evening a knock is heard. She makes a feeble attempt to hold him back, but he goes to the door; the noise of a struggle is heard outside. "My poor Chevalier!" she exclaims, and the curtain closes on this episode in her life.

In the next act Manon is the mistress of de Brétigny, admired by all for her rare beauty—"car par beauté je suis reine" she has the right to sing. The scene is the Promenade of the Cours la Reine. Traders have their booths under the large trees and to the right there is a dancing pavilion from which come the strains of a minuet now and then. Manon comes along with de Brétigny, whom she leaves after a while to buy some trinkets. At that moment the father of her former lover, the Count des Grieux, enters, to the surprise of de Brétigny, who asks what brought him to Paris. "My son, the Abbé," he replies. "The Abbé?" "Yes, he is at this moment preaching at the seminary of St. Sulpice, where he is on the point of taking orders; and it was you who made him change from Chevalier to Abbé by terminating his love affair." After seeing the fascinating Manon, he adds: "I now understand why you took such an interest in that

affair." Manon, finding out who he is, takes him aside and asks about his son: "Did he suffer? Did he mention my name?" "His tears were shed in silence; he did not speak ill of you." "And then?" "He learned the lesson all who are wise must learn—to forget!" With this he bows and leaves. "To forget!" echoes Manon, and promptly orders her astonished cousin to escort her to the St. Sulpice Seminary.

In the parlor of the Seminary, at that moment, some nuns and other women are talking rapturously about the eloquence of the new Abbé, whose sermon they have just heard. The Count des Grieux enters unobserved, followed, after a moment, by his son. The two are left alone. The step about to be taken by the son is by no means according to the wishes of the father, who urges him to reconsider. "What do you know of this life? Marry a worthy girl, raise a family—heaven asks no more than that." But the son's mind is made up. The world cannot tempt him—nor the thirty thousand livres his father promises to send him. But there is Manon! While he is singing his farewell to the world she enters, following the porter, whom she has feed to let her see the new Abbé.

In the chapel the choir is heard chanting *In Deo salutari meo* as Des Grieux enters, and, to

his amazement, sees Manon. "What are you doing here? Begone!" he exclaims; but she remains, to recall the days of their dalliance, to ask for his forgiveness, his pity, to press his hand, to exclaim "I love you." "Je t'aime!" she repeats with growing ardour. He calls on heaven to help him in this moment of temptation, implores her not to speak of love in this place. But "Je t'aime!" she repeats and finally he yields: "Come, Manon," he cries, "Je t'aime!"

A gambling-house in Paris is the scene of the next act. Manon brings Des Grieux. "All our money is gone," she says, "but here it is quickly won back." He recoils at the idea of gambling; but Lescaut, who has just been winning, urges him on: "You are wrong to refuse; Manon does not love poverty." Manon promises him her heart, her love forever, if he will play. Guillot—who has been trying to win Manon ever since that first scene in the Amiens courtyard—offers to play with him, the stake being a thousand pistoles. He loses, doubles the sum, and loses again, whereupon he accuses Des Grieux of cheating, and leaves muttering threats. Shortly afterward knocks are heard and police officers enter, with Guillot, who points out Des Grieux as the party to be arrested, together with Manon, "his accomplice." The Count des Grieux, who has

entered unobserved, also says, "Take them prisoners!" then, turning to his son: "Later on, I shall free you."

The road to Havre is the scene of the last act. Under guard of soldiers Manon is being taken, with other women of her class, to that port to be embarked to America. Des Grieux is waiting for her at a lonely spot. He has planned her rescue by engaging Lescaut, with hired accomplices, to take her forcibly from the soldiers. But Lescaut comes and tells him all is lost, for his men have fled; but he promises him a chance to speak with Manon, and draws him behind some bushes. The soldiers begin to pass, and the two men hear them say: "It is no glory to escort such women." "One of them is already half dead." "Her name is Manon." "Oh, heavens!" groans Des Grieux. Lescaut gives money to one of the soldiers and Manon is allowed to meet her former lover. She is exhausted with fatigue, and, after a scene of ecstatic reminiscences and passionate outpourings, dies in his arms.

As it is generally agreed that frail women are more sinned against than sinners, and that, if men were what they should be, these women, also, would be impeccable, one cannot withhold some degree of sympathy for Manon in her mis-

fortune. That Massenet, with his predilection for such "heroines," sympathized with her, in her pleasures and sorrows alike, it is needless to say. His music treats Manon's shallow feelings as if they were as sincere as the love of Des Grieux for her.

One suspects that it was at his instigation that his librettists, H. Meilhac and Ph. Gille, committed a dramatic blunder in order not to alienate the sympathies of the audience. Prevost makes it clear in his story why Manon was deported: she had been repeatedly arrested for cheating and stealing. In the opera, there is not the slightest intimation of this, the hearer being left to suppose she is exiled from France simply for being a courtesan and for having been accused of being a gambler's accomplice. The Chevalier also is presented in a much more favourable light in the opera than in the story.

The librettists must be congratulated on having had the good sense to eliminate the ridiculous "American" finale of Prevost's story, and in having inserted the splendidly operatic scene in the Seminary, which Scribe had overlooked when he adapted this story for Auber. Altogether, they provided Massenet with excellent opportunities for the exercise of his facile pen and he made such good use of them that many consider *Manon* his best opera.

When it was sung in Vienna in 1890, in presence of the composer, with brilliant success, the most eminent critic of the time, Dr. Hanslick, pronounced it "the best and most effective work produced at the Opéra-Comique since *Mignon* and *Carmen*." "In his dances he imitated the style of Lully and Rameau with extraordinary cleverness," he adds. Here and there his music shows the influence of Ambroise Thomas, Gounod, and Bizet, and from Wagner he learned how to use leading motives in a discreet and unobtrusive way.

Hanslick misses coherence, or form, in this score: "it consists entirely of details. . . . The most fascinating motives swim down stream before our eyes, like roses cast singly into the water. Seldom does he take us into a garden, large or small, where we can remain for a while."

Hanslick was a poor judge of form (he accused Wagner and Liszt of not having any!) and he did not see that Massenet gave coherence to his music by the leading motives to which he refers. When Manon sings her first song: "Je suis encore tout étourdie," we hear a charming syncopated melody which accompanies her on subsequent occasions. The Chevalier, also, has his characteristic violoncello-cantilena; and these are subjected to many subtle transformations as

the play progresses psychologically. In the final scene, the orchesta follows the lovers in recalling pleasant episodes in their lives.

It is by such devices that an opera is raised to the rank of a music drama, with form—that is, coherence—whereas the old-fashioned opera, with its mosaic of unconnected, unrecurring airs, has no real form.

The episode in the Seminary, with its commingling of ecclesiastic and amorous strains, is Massenet every inch. While Auber omitted it, one cannot but guess that it was this scene that suggested his opera to Massenet, who is at his very best in it. The polyphonic choruses in the chapel once more bear witness to his technical skill and his *ars celare artem.* It takes a Frenchman to be scholarly and popular at the same time!

When *Manon* had its first performance in Paris, Mme. Heilbronn impersonated the title rôle, Talazak was Des Grieux, and Taskin was Lescaut. It was sung seventy-eight times in 1884. In its second year, only ten performances of it were given; but soon it recovered lost ground, and on October 16, 1893, it had its two hundredth hearing at the Opéra-Comique. The receipts for these two hundred performances were 1,164,534 francs.

An English version was produced by the Carl Rosa Company, in 1885.

Among the prima-donnas who became famous impersonators of Manon in France, England, and America were Marie Rose, Sybil Sanderson, Minnie Hauk, and Geraldine Farrar. In Vienna the two leading rôles were taken by Renard and Van Dyck.

The first American performance was by the Mapleson Company at the New York Academy of Music on December 23, 1885, with Minnie Hauk as Manon, Giannini as Des Grieux, Del Puente as Lescaut. At the Metropolitan Opera House Sibyl Sanderson was heard as Manon in 1895, with Jean de Reszke, and Melba in 1896 with the same tenor. Ernest Van Dyck's Des Grieux was heard in 1899, with Frances Savile.

Caruso chose Des Grieux for his third French rôle (following *Faust* and *Carmen*) and he made his début in it at the Metropolitan with Geraldine Farrar as Manon and Antonio Scotti as Lescaut. The great Italian tenor was convincing and realistic in the portrayal of the young nobleman struggling for honour against the allurements of beauty, his strongest moments being in the St. Sulpice episode.

Miss Farrar, by her rare charm and beauty, accomplished the impossible in making the seemingly idiotic constancy of Des Grieux com-

prehensible. After seeing this dainty maid, looking demureness itself, sitting under the tree in the Amiens court-yard—one of those pictures which impress themselves indelibly on the memory of all spectators—who can wonder at his instantaneous infatuation? "Ne suis-je pas Manon?" from those lips means more to him than family honour and religious vows. She makes the letter scene a charming episode, and most touching is her portrayal of the collapse and death on the Havre road; dying on the stage is a specialty in which this American prima-donna has no equal. Like Emma Calvé, she acts with her voice—an accomplishment rare even among the greatest operatic artists. Like Edmond Clément, with whom she sang this opera again in the Metropolitan on December 6, 1909, she sings French music with the true Parisian idiom. Nothing could be more delightfully Gallic than the archness and grace with which she sings the dainty air in honour of youth and beauty. A foreign critic has referred to Massenet's opera as "a delicately perfumed score"; this fragrance was exhaled by her singing.

If any fault could be found with her conception of the part, it would be that she gave to the love-scene, in which she persuades Des Grieux to

renounce the priesthood, a passionate intensity hardly consonant with the character of this heartless coquette. However, Massenet's music calls for such intensity; and as for that, has not the great Bizet put into the mouths of the unworthy Carmen and Escamillo (just before he goes into the bull ring) one of the most soulful of all love songs?

Brief reference has been made in the foregoing to the fact that Massenet here makes use, as in most of his operas, of leading motives. On this point he himself once remarked to a Parisian journalist:*

"The whole opera turns around and grows out of fifteen motives, in which, so to speak, my characters are incarnated. For each character there is one motive; Manon alone, whose type is a mixture of melancholy and gaiety, has two, to indicate this alternative. These motives pervade the opera from beginning to end, now dimly and again brightly, like the light on a scene, in accordance with the situations. Thus all the characters preserve their personality distinctly. From a general point of view I have done the same thing for the different scenes; each one of them has the exact colour of the situation, true to its epoch. As for the note of

* *Le Figaro*, 19 Janvier, 1884.

life, passion, actuality, it is Manon and Des Grieux who give it. And this intentional contrast between local sentiment and human feeling is one of the effects on which I think I have a right to count particularly."

WERTHER

The temple of French opera was constructed with the aid of foreigners. Three Italians—Lully, Cherubini, Spontini—and two Germans—Gluck and Meyerbeer—lent valuable aid.

In the case of genuine French composers, foreign influences also made themselves strongly felt, contrary to the general impression that the Parisians are sufficient unto themselves. To mention only a few: Boieldieu's most successful work, *La Dame Blanche*, was based on a novel by Walter Scott. Bizet's *Carmen* has a Spanish plot and colouring; while of Gounod's operas the two which have survived are settings of Shakspere's *Romeo and Juliet* and Goethe's *Faust*.

Goethe also provided the plot for one of Massenet's best operas. But while the great German poet was interested in librettos, and tried his own hand at them, he doubtless would have shaken his head incredulously had anyone

foretold him that opera composers would seek material for a plot in his youthful story, *The Sorrows of Werther.* Yet, before Massenet, six had already done this, and all of them, with the exception of Wenzel Miller, whose opera was a parody, wrote for the French or Italian stage. How Massenet came to do it, was related by him to Robert Charvay.*

"You wish to know about the origin of *Werther* —how the idea sprouted in my mind of putting on the stage this adorable and poignant 'heart-tragedy' of Goethe . . . why, furthermore, during six years, the score remained in my portfolio without receiving its baptism of fire on the stage? Very well, listen.

"It was in 1885. I had just finished *Le Cid.* By chance I met, one day, Georges Hartmann, who in his waste hours and under a pseudonym had already written operatic poems and opéra-comique librettos. 'I know you thoroughly,' he said to me, 'and I know the depths of your mind. . . . Yesterday you put the finishing touch to a grandiloquent, heroic work and to-day I find you nervous, agitated, unquiet. . . . You've just left the table and you're hungry again . . . You're hunting around the town for a subject, seeking what you may devour.

* *Echo de Paris.* Supplément illustré, Janvier, 1893.

. . . Well, I know one, delicious, exquisite, which has never been set to music in France, and which, in your place, I would jump at. . . . What, pray?—It is a passionate yet delicate drama, poignant but *intime*. . . . What, you repeat?—A synthetic soul-tragedy which, in simple and idyllic surroundings, in the peaceful atmosphere of a German village, unfolds among three people only: the husband, wife and—friend. Werther? Yes, Werther! . . . Doesn't this paradox tempt you to give us, at last, a virtuous woman on your stage . . . you who have given us so many courtesans, including our Mother Eve!' . . . 'Very well,' I answered, 'bring me a plan for the scenes.'

"Hartmann immediately started on his work, and, a few days later, in collaboration with Paul Milliet and Edouard Blau, he showed me the first sketch of *Werther*.

"The scenic development pleased me perfectly, I was won immediately. . . . And let me tell you, in parenthesis, I am far from being an agreeable collaborator, far from it. Very particular, troublesome, authoritative, I expect the verses to adapt themselves exactly to the melodic form; I insist that the style and the development of the scenes shall answer adequately to the conception, born in my imagina-

tion on a given theme. . . . I do not permit . . . but enough! My collaborators are usually old and excellent friends who accept me as I am, with the sum total of my good qualities and my stock of faults entire.

"I began to work. . . . The first measures I wrote in the spring of 1885, and the last were finished the winter of 1886. . . . Almost two years of labour! . . .

"The score was engraved at once. . . . I was thinking of who should be my chief artist, the one who was to be the reincarnation of the heroine. A singer of the first rank presented herself to my mind—Mme. Caron. Some beginnings of arrangements were made at that time with Carvalho, but they didn't have time to come to anything. The Opéra-Comique, at that period, passed successively into the hands of Mr. Jules Barbier and Mr. Paravey.

"The latter just then was asking me for a work he might perform during the Exposition. . . . He knew of *Werther*, and begged me to let him have it. . . . But I preferred to give him *Esclarmonde*, a very spectacular drama, which lent itself far better to the unfolding of a fine mise-en-scène, to the magnificence of stage decorations and costumes, and for which I had a wonderful interpreter, Miss Sibyl Sanderson,

gifted with a miraculous voice, capable of rising to any heights. . . . Mr. Paravey accepted the substitute. . . . He was right, for *Esclarmonde* had one hundred performances during the exposition.

"Meanwhile, *Manon* was given in Vienna—I went to the final rehearsals. Thanks to the way it was staged, to the admirable work of the orchestra, and especially to the gifts of the two principals, Mlle. Marie Renard and Van Dyck, the success was great. . . . *Manon* has reached its fiftieth performance in Vienna, a very high figure if one remembers that there a work is never performed more than once a week on the average!

"A few months later I had a letter from Van Dyck. 'What are you doing,' wrote this excellent artist, 'what are you doing with that *Werther* of which you spoke to me one night, behind the scenes? Why won't you give us the pleasure of creating it here?'

"I admit that I was delighted at the idea, and signed a contract for it with the direction of the Imperial Opera.

"In January, 1892, I left once more for Vienna. The day after my arrival a carriage decorated with the royal coat-of-arms came to take me to the first private hearing of my work. . . .

"With my invitation to the first rehearsal in my pocket, I arrived at the door of the opera-house at half-past nine in the morning, and was at once taken into the director's private office. Picture to yourself an enormous and luxurious room, large enough to admit two hundred people, and forming part of the apartment in which Mr. Jahn lives, right in the theatre.

"The artists were sitting waiting, in a charming and imposing group. At my entrance, all rose and bowed. The director came forward with a few well-chosen, but too complimentary words of welcome. The occasion was taking on the intimidating aspect of an official reception. . . . I was much moved. Aside from my two well-known interpreters, Mlle. Renard and Van Dyck, I knew no one. . . .

"The director, however, took me to the piano on which my still unpublished score stood open at the first page.

"I sat down on the stool and was about to strike the first chords. . . . Shall I tell you that at this moment I was seized by a great emotion? . . . My heart beat as if it would burst. . . . In a second, with an intensity which was really painful, I felt my artistic responsibility. . . . What terrible rôle was I about to play? . . . That *Werther* score was already

six years old. . . . I hardly remembered it. . . . How many of my works had been performed in that time. . . . Here I was, alone, far from my own country, representing, through force of circumstances, French musical art. . . . I felt the unmerited honour which I was receiving. . . . Was I not in Vienna, the Emperor's guest, entertained at the state's expense, remembering that, alone, two composers before me—incontrovertible masters those two—Verdi and Wagner, had been the objects of such high and precious distinction? . . . All these thoughts at once came to my mind, tears filled my eyes, and there I sat stupidly and began to cry like a woman.

"What kind attentions, what exquisite delicacy was shown me! 'Courage! Courage!' came from every side. . . . I made a tremendous effort to command myself, and still trembling with emotion I played my entire score. . . . This was, at Vienna, the first hearing of *Werther*.

"At last, on the 16th of February, 1892, at seven o'clock in the evening, the first performance took place at the Imperial Theatre.

"It is not for me to tell you of the reception of my work, by the press and Viennese public, . . . but I may be permitted, at least, to express my grateful admiration to those who helped it to succeed.

"To the eminent director, to Mr. Jahn, who not only mounted the music drama with jealous care, but who, during all that trying period of rehearsals, never ceased to surround me with evidences of affection and with kind attentions. I feel for him an unchangeable friendship. It was he who, at the first performance, did me the rare and precious honour of conducting his wonderful orchestra himself. . . .

"I have already often spoken of the artistic conscience, devotion, and fervour of Mlle. Marie Renard and of Van Dyck. I won't repeat. . . . What is the use? They have so often shown their mettle, and have won so many victories! . . .

"Let me add, however, that Van Dyck gave me the happiness at that time of giving me—in collaboration with Camille de Rodaz—the plan for a most charming ballet in one act: *Le Carillon*, for which I wrote the music, and which is still being performed in Vienna with much success.

"But in spite of the artistic joys that my sojourn in Vienna gave me—during my few weeks' stay, they had been gracious enough to give at the Theatre and the Imperial Chapel the works of my friends and masters: Thomas, Gounod, Bizet, Delibes, Saint-Saëns, etc. . . . I was obliged to leave after the second performance of *Werther*.

"My many occupations, my work at the Conservatoire demanded my return to Paris.

"It was then that Carvalho wrote and scolded me amicably for my flight to Austria—'Come back to us,' he wrote, 'and repatriate Werther whom, musically, you have made French.'

"We easily came to an understanding, and agreed on the performance at the Opéra-Comique in the early fall.

"But in the interval—I am proud to tell it—*Werther* had the honour of an official hearing. The Minister of Public Education, M. Bourgeois, begged me to have the principal parts of my work performed at an evening party which should take place at his residence. I consented with delight, and, one evening, for more than an hour I was at the piano in the ministerial drawing-room, accompanying some remarkable interpreters, such as Mesdames Isaac and Leclercq, Bouvet. . . .

"Rehearsals began at the Opéra-Comique. The distribution of parts was superior even to my hopes, between Mlle. Delna, who had made a triumphant revelation of her gifts in *Les Troyens:* Mlle. Laisné, the very charming young girl who won two first prizes at the Conservatoire that year; and, furthermore, Ibos, the excellent tenor.

"Under the able management of Carvalho, and thanks to his initiative and his really brilliant finds, the mise-en-scène is perfectly original and has nothing in common with the one in Vienna. It is quite new, it is quite different, and it is quite as good.

"I do not know what awaits me at the public performance, but I want to say at once how touched I have been by the artistic sympathy and devotion which the orchestra and its excellent conductor, Danbé, have constantly shown for my work. . . . And this impression is all the stronger since, in the score of *Werther*, the orchestra symbolically represents one of the chief characters.

"And now I am waiting with a somewhat nervous impatience the final judgment, a judgment from which there is no appeal, of the great Parisian public. It is to that, you see, that one must always return; to that, in artistic matters, belongs the last word."

"At that moment, as my eminent interlocutor finished his story, a knock came at the door of the study where we were.

" 'Here,' said a voice, 'are the last proofs of your new score.'

"On the cover I read the title: '*Thaïs*, lyric drama in three acts and six tableaux, poem by

Louis Gallet from the novel of Anatole France, music by Massenet.'

"'Ah yes!' said the master with a smile, 'this is life. . . . To-day *Werther*, to-morrow *Thaïs*. . . . One work pushes aside the other. . . . Is this or that the better? Who could say at the present time . . . and what does it matter? The great thing is to work constantly and to produce, and then to produce again. . . . You see, it is as Voltaire said: 'We must cultivate our garden!'"

This interesting interview appeared on the day of the première of *Werther* in Paris, January 16, 1893. Geneva had got ahead a few days in giving the first performance in French of this opera. Within a month Brussels, Antwerp, Toulon, Toulouse, Nice, Rheims, Amiens, Nantes, and Lyons had followed suit. Forty-three representations were given at the Paris Opéra-Comique the first year, but during the second there were only two! It took the opera some years, after the first *succès de curiosité* had passed, to win a real success.

To this day, while critics and musicians laud the work as a masterly score, the public (at least outside of France) has not taken it to its heart as it has some of the other Massenet operas. Even Jean de Reszke, who (in agreement with

Anton Seidl and other good judges) had a great admiration for this music, could not make it popular, either in London or in New York. Sutherland Edwards relates in his *Personal Recollections* how Augustus Harris, who did not think the English public would like this work, nevertheless produced it, to humour that great tenor. "To the shame of our opera-goers," Mr. Edwards continues, "Massenet's charming music was not appreciated. At the end of the performance Sir Augustus said to De Reszke: 'Well, you have had your way, *Werther* has been played, and for the present season this one representation will be enough.'" He, nevertheless, consented to a repetition; but the advance sale was so small (a beggarly £30) that it was not given. De Reszke had held out to the last; but when he had sent a request for a couple of stalls ("if there were any left") and the manager had sent him 80 stalls, 20 boxes, and 100 amphitheatre stalls, with a note saying that "if he wanted twice as many he could have them," he also succumbed.

It is not a mere coincidence that nearly all the successful modern operas are based on popular plays, Puccini's works being a conspicuous instance. The public wants action, and is slow to warm to a work which has too little of it. No book has ever been more widely popular than

The Sorrows of Werther; but, unlike *Manon Lescaut*, it contains only a few incidents that can be utilised for theatrical purposes.

Under the circumstances, one cannot but praise Edouard Blau, Paul Milliet, and G. Hartmann for their skill in constructing a serviceable libretto out of this unpromising material.

In the first act we see the bailiff, Charlotte's father, teaching his youngest children to sing a Christmas carol. Charlotte herself is dressing for a ball. She is ready before the carriage arrives, and gives the children their daily bread and butter, as she had done ever since her mother died. Among those invited to the ball is Werther, her cousin, whom she salutes with a kiss. While they are at the ball, Albert returns. He has been away six months, and wonders whether the feelings of Charlotte, who is engaged to marry him, have remained unchanged. Some words of her younger sister, Sophie, reassure him, and he leaves.

Enter Charlotte and Werther, back from the ball. Charlotte is talking of her mother, but Werther interrupts her with a passionate declaration of love. At that moment her father appears, announcing the return of Albert. Charlotte hears it with mixed feelings. She had become betrothed to Albert at her mother's

desire, not her heart's; and as she departs, Werther declares: "If you keep that promise I shall die!"

Act II. Three months later. Charlotte and Albert are married. Albert knows that Werther loves his wife, but has confidence in his friend. Charlotte and Werther meet again, and he renews his confessions. She begs him to leave, not to try to see her again till Christmas, at any rate.

Act III. Charlotte alone, in her home. She wonders how she could have sent Werther away. "Since he has left me, he is ever in my mind." She once more reads over the letters he has written to her, and is overcome with emotion. Sophie's efforts to chase away her melancholy are unavailing. Left alone again, she prays for strength, when suddenly Werther appears. "Yes, it is I," he exclaims; "I am here on the day you said I might return." They look at the harpsichord, at the books they used to read together. Her voice betrays her feelings. "You love me!" he exclaims. And then, in the words of Goethe, "he put his arms round her waist, pressed her to his bosom, and covered her trembling, stuttering lips with furious kisses. 'Werther!' she cried, with smothering voice. 'Werther!' she repeated, with a calm, noble expression, pushing him away from her. He

did not resist, but released her and threw himself madly at her feet. Timidly and confused, she collected her wits and, trembling between love and anger, said: 'This is the last time, Werther! You shall never see me again.' And with a look of deep love at the wretch she hastened into another room and locked the door."

Albert, coming home, hears that Werther has returned. He notes his wife's agitation. At that moment a servant enters with a note to him from Werther, reading: "I am going on a long journey; will you lend me your pistols?" As he gives them to the servant, with a peculiar look at her, she has a horrible presentiment, and, exclaiming, "Oh God! thou wouldst not have me arrive too late!" leaves hastily.

Act IV. Christmas night. Orchestral prelude, accompanying a snow storm. Then the scene changes to Werther's apartment. Charlotte's voice is heard calling Werther. No answer. She enters hastily, sees Werther's body, and throws herself on it in despair. He is dying, but has voice enough left to beg her forgiveness for what he has done, and to tell her that she had done what was just and right. She wants to summon aid, but he says it is too late, and he dies happily after hearing from her lips the confession that she had loved him from the

moment when she had seen him for the first time. The voices of children singing their carol mingle with his dying strains.

In this last scene, and in this alone, the librettists deviated, and wisely so, from Goethe's story. In that, it is the servants who discover Werther dying. The doctor is summoned, and a general alarm brings Albert, the bailiff, and his oldest sons. The suicide was buried at eleven o'clock in the evening. "The bailiff followed the coffin with his sons. Albert could not do the same. Charlotte's life was despaired of." That is the only mention made of her by the poet in this scene.

Thackeray, in his satire on *The Sorrows of Werther*, summed up the situation less tragically:

> Charlotte, having seen his body
> Borne before her on a shutter,
> Like a well-conducted person,
> Went on cutting bread and butter.

That Goethe's book is an autobiographic episode in the form of fiction is known to most persons. The magistrate Buff and his two daughters actually lived at Wetzlar; there was a real Werther (his name was Jerusalem), who committed suicide in 1772 in consequence of unrequited love. Goethe was actually infatuated

with Charlotte Buff, who was betrothed to a man named Kestner; but, instead of committing suicide like his Werther and Jerusalem, Goethe eased his heart by writing this diary of his hopeless passion. It is this psychic realism that gave his book such an enormous vogue and social influence, and that makes it a great work of literature.*

In accepting it as the subject for an opera, Massenet may have had in mind Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, which also is a love story with little action. But *Tristan* pulsates with passion from beginning to end; it is a psychic drama, and each act has a stirring climax; whereas in *Werther* there is only one real climax. This, combined with the fact that the composer gave all his good melodies to the tenor, leaving little for the prima-donna to do except to look pretty and domestic, doubtless accounts for the fact that *Werther* is so seldom sung—a fact "to be deplored," as Henry E. Krehbiel remarks. *Werther* on the whole is, as he truly says, "a beautiful opera; as instinct with throbbing life

* When *Werther* had its first performance in Leipsic the title rôle was sung by a tenor named Buff, a grand-nephew of Goethe's Charlotte. A still stranger coincidence was the suicide of George Kestner, grandson of Charlotte, on the very evening when Massenet's opera was sung for the first time in Vienna.

in everyone of its scenes as the more widely admired *Manon* is in its best scene. It has its weak spots as have all of Massenet's operas, despite his mastery of technique, but its music will always appeal to refined, artistic sensibilities for its lyric charm, its delicate workmanship, its splendid dramatic climax in the duo between Werther and Charlotte, beginning: 'Ah! pourvu que je voie ces yeux toujours ouverts,' and its fine scoring. It smacks more of the atmosphere of the Parisian salon than of the sweet breezes with which Goethe filled the story, but no Frenchman has yet been able to talk aught but polite French in music for the stage, Berlioz excepted, and the music of *Werther* is of finer texture than that of most of the operas produced by Massenet since." *

Massenet himself said to a reporter: "Into *Werther* I put all my soul and artistic conscience."

The score—like that of *Esclarmonde*, which, though produced before *Werther*, was composed after it—bears witness to the influence of Wagner on Massenet, as on all French composers at that period. It is rather odd to hear a suggestion of the *Siegfried* forest sounds in the snow-storm which precedes the last act of *Werther*. Other

* *Chapters of Opera.* By Henry Edward Krehbiel. New York: H. Holt & Co., 1908, p. 240.

Wagnerian strains peep out of the score here and there, but not in such a way as to suggest actual plagiarism. Ingenious use is made of leading motives, and the opera is not divided into detached numbers but flows on steadily, the orchestra spinning its own melody, while the vocal parts are a sort of melodious recitative rising to a flowing arioso in impassioned moments especially in the third act, which is splendidly passionate, the climax coming at the moment when the long restrained Tristanesque love at last compels utterance. Here the music is truly inspired.

Emma Eames and Jean de Reszke aroused the audience to a rare pitch of enthusiasm in this love scene when the opera had its first hearing in America, on April 20, 1894, at the Metropolitan Opera House. Unfortunately, as was the custom of that time with novelties, the opera had been delayed till near the end of the season, so there was no opportunity to force it on the public, as it should have been. It was sung only once, and once again two seasons later; then it was shelved.

A brilliant revival came with the opening of the New Theatre in New York, on November 16, 1909. To *Werther* fell the honour of being the first opera to be produced at this house. The

title rôle was assigned to Edmond Clément, who had sung this part some fifty times in Paris during the preceding fifteen months, and almost as often in the provinces. It was his American début, and he won a great success. Every detail of his art as singer and actor was admirable, but it was particularly in the "Père, père, que je ne connais pas" that he proved that he not only had an agreeable voice and knew how to sing, but had also an emotional temperament, which counts for more in modern art than flawless singing.

Geraldine Farrar made her first appearance as Charlotte on this occasion. She had the advantages of youth and beauty so important in this rôle. But had she been as plain as Jenny Lind or Marianne Brandt, she would have invested it with exceptional charm, thanks to her rare gifts of facial and vocal expression. Her chameleonic voice was not only beautiful, it changed colour with every line of the poem, and her art made amends for Massenet's mistake in giving Charlotte fewer good airs than Werther. Despite her momentary yielding to love for her husband's friend, she remains a saint at heart, and saints are much more difficult to portray than sinners. Miss Farrar succeeded admirably in this case, as she succeeded with Elizabeth, in *Tannhäuser*, which, in the words of Lilli Leh-

mann, she made "infantine, demure, and saintly." Two pictures in these groups will remain forever in the memory of those who saw them: Charlotte cutting bread for her little sisters and brothers—an idyllic group that would inspire a painter to a master-work—and Charlotte beaming happily on Werther while he reads the manuscript translation of Ossian.

The memorable cast included also Alma Gluck, Dinh Gilly, and Pini Corsi.

LE CID

Is Massenet's *Le Cid* a legendary or a historic opera? That depends upon whether we accept Rodrigo del Bivar, usually known by the Arabic term Cid ("the Chief"), as a historic personage or a myth. Although his very sword is preserved in the Madrid Museum, and although tourists have shown to them at Burgos his monument with the inscription: "Here stood the house where was born, in 1026, Rodrigo Dias de Vibas, called the Cid Campeador; he died at Valencia, February 7, 1099," some historians have questioned the existence of such a man, as they have that of William Tell, King Arthur, Agamemnon, and Abraham. It is probable, however, that there was really such a warrior, who

fought, now against the Moors and at other times with them; a valorous, reckless, indomitable soldier, so fiercely independent that he defied even King Alfonso, who had to banish him repeatedly, and refused to serve as the vassal of any king. Nor was his moral character above reproach, for it is related of him that he once borrowed a large sum from the Jews, giving them as security some chests which he said were filled with treasure, but which, on being opened, were found to contain sand.

In choosing the old Spanish hero for an operatic subject, Massenet did very much what Gounod and his collaborators did when they gave Goethe's *Faust* an operatic cut; in both cases the love story was made the centre around which other things revolved as of secondary importance. Massenet's librettists are obviously not born poets, but they saw clearly enough that they could not tell the love story of Don Rodrigo as it is told in the "Chronique rimée" of the eleventh century, in which Rodrigo is represented as a very ardent soldier, but a very cool and coy lover, the latter being less remarkable when it is borne in mind that he is represented as being only thirteen years old. At that age he kills the Count Gomez de Gormaz, whose daughter, Chimène, calls upon the King for vengeance. Rodrigo is summoned

to court, whereupon Chimène demands him for her husband. Rodrigo is rude to the King and scorns the damsel, but the King compels him to marry her. He, however, is equal to the occasion; he marries her, but swears not to come near her until he has fought five battles with the Moors. He keeps his word, and that is the last heard of his love affair.

Such a story might do well enough for a burlesque operetta, but for an opera, MM. D'Ennery, Gallet, and Blau had to give it a different form, based partly on Corneille's play and its Spanish prototype, partly on their own fancy. It would hardly be worth while here to dwell on the different versions and details of the story. As adapted for Massenet's music it is in brief as follows: The Infanta of Spain and Chimène, daughter of the Count de Gormas, are both in love with Rodrigo, who is to be knighted by the King. The Infanta feels that, as a queen, she cannot marry him, and therefore, with a heavy heart, she cedes him to Chimène. Her father, the Count, expects to be appointed preceptor for the Infanta, but this honour is conferred instead on Rodrigo's father, Don Diego. This leads to a quarrel between the Count and Don Diego, in which the latter is worsted. He appeals to his son to avenge his

honour, and Don Rodrigo, after a terrible battle of emotions, attacks and kills Chimène's father, feeling that he has at the same time murdered her love for him and ruined his life's happiness.

In setting this libretto to music the versatile Massenet evidently aimed at creating a work in the style of Meyerbeer—spectacular and effective. When I heard it the first time I wrote that in so doing he made a mistake: "There is nothing grand or heroic about his muse, and the attempt to make her act heroically has resulted as unsuccessfully as would an attempt to make an Amazonian warrior of a petite and graceful Andalusian maiden. Massenet's music is feminine; it has voluptuous charms of melody, a lovely orchestral complexion, bright and chatty harmonic details, and a love for drawing-room scenes and gossip. Such music is suited to the *Manon* and *Werther* librettos, but not to a half-military opera like the *Cid*."

While there is some truth in this, there is also unjust exaggeration. Undoubtedly, the heroic is not Massenet's specialty, yet he has shown in several of his operas, including this one, that the hand which holds his pen can also deliver vigorous, masculine strokes. In the *Cid* there are not a few of these. From the operatic point of view, the most effective scene is that in front

of the Burgos cathedral, the organ and bells of which unite with the orchestra and chorus in an ensemble of real grandeur.

In several places, when two or more voices unite, the music has the true dramatic thrill. The gem of the opera, however, is Chimène's soulful *Pleurez, mes yeux*, which for a quarter of a century has been one of the most popular of French songs. Charming, also, is the ballet music, which, since the opera is seldom heard, has been rescued for the concert-hall and is often—though not so often as it deserves—heard at popular concerts. In the orchestration there is a great deal of esprit and fascinating detail, showing that the composer must have bestowed infinite pains upon it, though he wrote the score in less than nine months.

It was with a cast of exceptional brilliancy that *Le Cid* was produced at the Opéra in Paris, on November 30, 1885. Jean and Edouard de Reszke impersonated Rodrigue and Don Diègue; Plançon was the Comte de Gormas, while Mmes. Fidès-Devriès and Bosman had the parts of Chimène and L'Infante.

Nine performances were given in the last month of 1885, and forty-four in the following year. The total number from 1885 to 1892 was ninety-one, according to Imbert, who also gives

a list of twenty-six composers who preceded Massenet in setting this subject to music. Among them all there is not a Frenchman.

When *Le Cid* had its first performance in New York, on February 12, 1907, the cast was even greater than at the Paris première; for, beside Jean and Edouard de Reszke and Plançon in their original characters, no less a man than Jean Lassalle had the part of the King (in place of Melchisédec in Paris) and the rôles of L'Infante and Chimène were assumed by Clementine de Vere and Felia Litvinne.

This performance was given by way of celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Maurice Grau's connection with the stage. From my review of it I cite the following:

"Mme. De Vere's make-up might have been altered to advantage; vocally, she was at her best in the first act. Mme. Litvinne had another surprise for her admirers; her voice was clear, brilliant, tinged with passion, and altogether her Chimène will rank next to her Isolde. M. Lassalle made the most of the King, while M. Plançon's count was truly Spanish in hauteur and bearing. But the principal honours were carried off by the de Reszke brothers, both so admirable that it is difficult to say to whom the palm should be assigned. From reading the

libretto or score one gets no idea of how much could be made of Don Diego's rôle both in action and song; M. Edouard de Reszke reveals its possibilities in the most delightful way; his sonorous voice never seemed more mellow and emotional than last evening. As for M. Jean de Reszke, his Rodrigo has added another to the long list of impersonations which none who have seen and heard them will ever forget. Tenors are usually undersized, often effeminate-looking men, while this Polish tenor is the very incarnation of manliness. Not only are his stature and appearance manly, but his voice has a manly ring like that of no other tenor. He is the Cid among tenors, and, in all probability, Massenet had him in mind when he fashioned that rôle. Just to look at his chivalrous figure would be worth the price of a ticket. Although the Cid music is perhaps a trifle high for his voice, he sang it with the purity of tone, energy, and dramatic intensity of feeling that are now inseparable from everything he does."

LA NAVARRAISE

While England has, so far, manifested less interest in Massenet's operas than France, Belgium, Germany, and America, there is one

of them which actually was heard first in London.

On June 20, 1894, Augustus Harris produced at Covent Garden *La Navarraise*, an "épisode lyrique" in two acts, by Jules Massenet, with Emma Calvé as the heroine. Paris had to wait till October 8 of the following year before hearing this opera, also with Calvé; and it was with the same superlative artist that it was first given in New York, at the Metropolitan Opera House, on December 11, 1895.

La Navarraise is a military opera, but it is extremely unlike *The Daughter of the Regiment.* There are drums and fifes and brasses in that work, too; yet how dear old Donizetti would have opened his eyes (and probably shut his ears) could he have heard this century-end soldier-opera, of which an English critic said that "there is little in the score but firing of cannons and beating of drums."

The stage directions for the opening scene indicate the spirit of this whole "épisode lyrique": "In the horizon the snow-covered Pyrenees are visible. Soldiers, begrimed with powder, coming from the valley, straggle past, out of line. Some of them, wounded, are supported by their companions; others, dying, are carried on litters. A group of women pray in silence before a

Madonna. A night-light burns before the holy image. It is six o'clock in the evening. Some women are looking over the barricade. From time to time rifle shots and heavy artillery are heard. The women stop praying and listen anxiously."

Into this atmosphere, stifling with the smell of powder, comes, trembling and out of breath, Anita, the beautiful black-eyed orphan from Navarre. She is in love with the sergeant, Araquil, who presently appears, and there is a love scene, which is interrupted by the arrival of the sergeant's father, a purse-proud man who refuses his consent to his son's marriage unless the bride brings a dowry of two thousand douros. Anita is penniless. Her lover is taken away by his father, and she remains, plunged in grief and despair. In this mood she overhears General Garrido of the Royalist troops offering a reward to anyone who will vanquish the Carlist enemy, Zuccaraga, who has captured an important Basque village. Anita presents herself impetuously, and offers to do it for two thousand douros. "What is your name?" he asks. "I have none—I am the girl from Navarre," she replies, and rushes off to the enemy's camp.

Her lover returns and searches for her in vain. Ramon, a lieutenant, informs him that some of

GERVILLE-REACHE AS HERODIAS IN "HÉRODIADE"

the wounded soldiers said they saw her enter the Carlist camp and ask for Zuccaraga; that general, he adds, "is said to be very fond of women —he is young and good-looking." Furious with jealousy, Araquil shouts: "Is she a spy or worse? I shall find out!" and with that he rushes off.

The soldiers, in groups, partake of their rations of soup and wine, then wrap themselves in their blankets and fall asleep. The orchestra plays a dreamy nocturne as an intermezzo. Suddenly shots are heard in the distance. Anita rushes in, pale as death, with dishevelled hair, and blood stains on her arms. She informs the horrified General Garrido that she has killed Zuccaraga; her gestures confirm her words, and he gives her the money under promise of secrecy.

She can now marry Araquil. She has the dowry. But where is he? Soon he appears, mortally wounded in the effort to enter the enemy's camp, where he hoped to rescue her from sin. The sight of her gold, the secret of which she has promised not to reveal, convinces him of her guilt. Funeral bells toll in the distance. They are for the dead Carlist general. Araquil has an inkling of the truth, and dies with the words: "The price of blood—horrible!" Anita's mind gives way under the strain, and

with maniacal laughter she throws herself on her lover's body.

When this opera was first produced, Massenet was accused of having been led by the extraordinary success of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* to try his hand also at the "blood and thunder" veristic style. But Mascagni's opera appeared in 1890, and was an immediate success. If Massenet had really wanted to benefit by the excitement over this new type of short opera, he surely would have done so at once, instead of waiting half a decade.*

Doubtless, one reason why Massenet was eager to write a war opera was that it gave him a welcome opportunity to show his critics that he was able to do something entirely different from his usual style of sentimental, tender, amorous effusions. A love story runs through *La Navarraise*, too, but it is almost smothered in the fumes of gunpowder.

There is as much "atmosphere" in the score

* In an earlier opera—*Werther*, near the end of Act I—Massenet uses a melody quite like one in *Cavalleria*. As *Werther* was sung in Paris for the director Carvalho as early as 1889, or a year before *Cavalleria* was produced, there can be no question of borrowing on the part of the Frenchman; —nor on the part of the Italian, as *Werther* was not sung publicly till 1892. The critic Fourcaud remarks that Mascagni treated this melody like a pupil, Massenet like a master.

of this opera as in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, but atmosphere of a very different kind; nor is it all of the kind which is created by firing rifles and guns, ringing bells, blowing trumpet calls, clashing castanets and cymbals, and beating drums. The whole orchestra is belligerent, noisy, explosive—how could it be otherwise? When I heard this opera the first time I was so absorbed in the action and in the realistic art of Mme. Calvé that I forgot to listen to the music as such and gauge its value. I had the same experience, as a youth, with the dragon fight in Wagner's *Siegfried*. Subsequently, I learned that in both cases the music revealed the hand of a master.

The exquisite nocturne, played while the soldiers are asleep, and the love-episode in the first part, make an effective contrast to the "mélodies frénétiques et tumultueuses" (as Alfred Bruneau called them) of the rest of the score.

Jules Claretie's story, *La Cigarette*, was the source from which Henri Cain obtained the material for the libretto of this opera. He was accused of making the heroine the central figure instead of the hero, but that was done because the opera was admittedly written to give Emma Calvé another opportunity to reveal her rare gifts of dramatic impersonation. All who were

privileged to see her in this rôle remember how charmingly she sang *Vierge très-bonne*, and the few other melodious phrases assigned to her; but what held one spellbound was the emotional realism of her action and facial expression. To say where she was at her best would be to tell the whole story again, to the harrowing shrieks of maniacal laughter when she hears the tolling for the dead general and thinks it is her wedding bells.

The cast at the London première of *La Navarraise*, in 1894, was exceptionally strong; it included, besides Calvé, Alvarez, Gilibert, Plançon, Bonnard, Dufriche.

CHARLES GILIBERT

VI

THE LESS KNOWN OPERAS

VI

THE LESS KNOWN OPERAS

LA GRAND' TANTE

AS HOLDER of the Prix de Rome, Massenet had a right to be heard on the operatic stage. The directors of the Opéra-Comique, Ritt and Leuven, provided him with a libretto by J. Adenis and Ch. Granvallet, entitled *Alice.* This name was changed to *La Grand' Tante;* Massenet set to work on it industriously, and soon was able to dedicate his completed score to his esteemed teacher, Ambroise Thomas.

The first performance was on the 3d of April, 1867, and was followed by sixteen others—not a bad record for a beginner. To be sure, the work had the advantage of being sung by two prominent artists—Mlle. Heilbronn and Victor Capoul—besides Mlle. Giraud.

The story of the one-act opera is a trifle light as air. The Marquis de Kerdrel returns from Africa, where he has served in the army as

quartermaster, to inherit the estate of his grand-uncle. He meets his grand-aunt, Alice, falls in love with her at sight, and offers her his hand and heart; which is not so strange as it seems, for she is pretty, and only twenty years old. Complications arise through the discovery of a will in which the grand-uncle disinherits de Kerdrel and leaves everything to Alice; but it is not signed. A contest of generosity ensues. He goes so far as to counterfeit the signature, while she tears up the document. The upshot is, of course, a wedding.

Though this subject was better suited for farce than for opera, Massenet made so much of it that the critics paid him some encouraging compliments.

Clément wrote: "The music is well written and interesting; it gives evidence of thorough study." Gustave Bertrand found that the young composer did not treat the voice as skilfully as the instruments, and that he was more successful in the slow than in the fast movements. The eminent Ernest Reyer expressed this opinion: "I have found in this brief act excellent melodic gifts, great skill in the use of the orchestra, couplets full of swing and fire"; while the no less famous J. Weber wrote: "The score of M. Massenet is not only written with that skill which

we have previously noted [in his concert pieces], but he aims at real comic effects instead of the mere sprightliness of dance music; his melodies are individual, pleasing, and spontaneous."

Still another critic, Eugène Tarbé, was struck by the fact that Massenet seemed to know instinctively how to write for the stage ("la science de la scène"), which others acquire only through much experience.

DON CÉSAR DE BAZAN

In the list of Massenet's operas *Don César de Bazan* is always named as the second. Actually, the second opera he wrote was *La Coupe du roi de Thulé* (*The Cup of the King of Thule*), but it was never performed.

In the year 1869 a libretto with that name was given to all composers who wished to take part in a competition announced by the Ministère des Beaux Arts, which promised to stage the successful score at the Opéra. Massenet secured a copy of this libretto, the authors of which were L. Gallet and Ed. Blau, and in due course of time sent in his manuscript.

Forty-one other composers competed for the prize, and the winner was Eugène Diaz. The jury, in their report, said it was only just to

mention four other scores which, for one reason or another, had come nearest in merit to the one chosen; and of these, by an almost unanimous vote, the first was Massenet's.

Concerning it the jury remarked: "From a musical point of view, a most notable work, penned evidently by a thorough musician. From the scenic point of view, it seemed very defective. The writer doubtless followed a high ideal, but one which seemed incompatible with theatrical exigencies."

Apparently Massenet shared the opinion that the music in itself was superior to the opera, for he dismembered it and transferred the best numbers in it to several other works, especially *Les Erynnies* and *Le Roi de Lahore*, the third and best act of which was, as Georges Servières states, transferred "textuellement" from *La coupe du roi de Thulê.*

In 1872 the composer, Jules Duprato, undertook to set to music a libretto by d'Ennery, Dumanoir, and Chantepie, entitled *Don César de Bazan.* It was to be produced at the Opéra, but the composer discovered that he was not in sympathy with the subject, and abandoned it. In this emergency an appeal was made to Massenet, who consented and wrote the score in the short time of six weeks.

Don César is a Spanish grandee in reduced circumstances, who is to be executed for having fought with an officer at a time when, by a royal edict, all duelling had been forbidden on penalty of death. In prison he is visited by an old friend, Don José de Santarem, now Prime Minister of Spain, who is in love with the Queen. She has refused to listen to him except by way of retaliation in case the King should make love to another woman. The King has become infatuated with a street singer named Maritana, but cannot make her his mistress unless she becomes a court lady. To make her one, Don José proposes that Don César should marry her, promising him that in that case he will enable him to save his life by escaping immediately after the ceremony. Don César consents; the Minister does not keep his promise, but the prisoner nevertheless escapes, with the aid of a boy, Lazarille, whom he had befriended. In course of time, Don César appears again at court, where his wife, in the meantime, has checked the King's advances. He tells His Majesty that the Prime Minister has been making love to the Queen and that he has killed him, to avenge the royal honour; whereupon the grateful monarch makes him Governor of Granada.

Had Massenet been as old as Duprato, he, also, would probably have refused to write music to such a silly story. But he was only thirty, and at that age nothing seems impossible to an ambitious man. However, he could hardly do himself justice in composing four acts in six weeks. The fourth, particularly, shows the effect of undue haste. Critical opinion was divided. Clément declared that the music was symphonic rather than dramatic, and other conservative judges scented Wagnerian influences, though his real model, as Hugues Imbert intimates, was Gounod.

Georges Servières mentions the best numbers in the score: a short march played as an interlude in the second act, a melodious berceuse sung by Lazarille, which had to be repeated, a dainty madrigal, a sevillana played as an entr'acte—which won a general popularity that has not waned yet—an arietta of Lazarille, "the rhythm of which recalled the chanson du *Passant.*"

The first performance was at the Opéra-Comique on November 30, 1872. Altogether it was given eight times that year, and five times in 1873. The score having been destroyed by the burning of this theatre, Massenet rewrote it, and revised the orchestration in 1888. In Paris

the opera has never been revived, but it has been sung in provincial cities, and in 1896 it was given in Brussels, with Gilibert in the cast. The original cast in Paris included Bouhy as Don César, Lherie as Charles II, Neveu as Don José, Bernard as the Captain, Priola as Maritana, and Galli-Marié as Lazarille.

LE ROI DE LAHORE

When Massenet's third opera was produced in Paris, on April 27, 1877, it was considered a quite remarkable thing that one so young (he was thirty-five) not only succeeded in getting an elaborate work in five acts accepted for the Opéra, but in winning for it popular favour. This opera was *The King of Lahore.* It is based on a story taken by Louis Gallet from the Hindu *Mahabharata.* The principal characters are King Alim, his Minister and cousin Scindia, whose niece Sita is a priestess in the temple of Indra, of which Timour is the high priest.

Scindia, in the first scene, which is placed in the temple, informs Timour that he has fallen in love with Sita and begs him to absolve her of her vow of celibacy. When the high priest refuses this, Scindia informs him of a rumour that Sita has an unknown lover, who visits her in

the temple. Timour, enraged, promises to investigate the matter.

The scene changes to the inner sanctuary of the temple. Scindia talks with Sita and persuades her to tell of her visitor. She admits that there is one, who comes at the hour of prayer—whether he is human or divine, she knows not. Furious at hearing the rumour thus confirmed by her own lips he tries to persuade her to be his, and on her refusing, he strikes the gong and, summoning Timour and the other priests, denounces Sita for having a sacrilegious love affair. "Let her expiate her crime with her life," the priests shout. At that moment the "unknown" enters, exclaiming: "No! She belongs to me! Let her live." It is King Alim himself; yet Timour denounces his love as a crime—a crime which he must expiate by leading an army against the Mohammedans, who have invaded India. Sita may go with him. White with rage at this turn of affairs, Scindia vows he will end the King's career.

The desert of Thôl is the scene of the second act. The noise of a battle comes from the distance. Alim's forces have been routed, and he himself appears, mortally wounded by Scindia, who succeeds in making the soldiers accept him as the successor of the King, who is left dying,

deserted by all but Sita. After he has breathed his last, soldiers return and carry her off, by order of Scindia.

A vision of the Hindu paradise is presented in the next act. In the midst of all the splendours and delights that the Oriental imagination can conceive, the latest arrival, Alim, alone is unhappy. The God Indra asks him the cause of his melancholy, whereupon Alim tells of his love for Sita and begs to be allowed to return to earth. Indra grants the request with the understanding that he is to cease living again the moment she dies.

In the fourth act he is back in Lahore in time to witness the coronation of Scindia, who looks on him with horror as an avenging spectre. But when Alim claims Sita, who is about to be married to Scindia, as his own, he is taken for a madman. Scindia orders him to be put to death, but the high priest interferes. In the last act Sita seeks refuge in the temple to escape from the attentions of the hated Scindia. Timour permits Alim to join her, and once more the lovers are "imparadised in one another's arms." Their plan to escape is frustrated by the arrival of Scindia. Seizing a dagger, Sita stabs herself and at the same instant Alim falls dead.

While some of the critics held the brilliant

spectacle of the Indian Paradise, with its gorgeous scenery and the voluptuous dances, responsible for the thirty performances attained by this opera in its first year, others admitted that Massenet's music had much to do with its success; and with this opera he established his claims to being one of the composers to be reckoned with thenceforth by the managers; all the more when the Parisian success was duplicated in various cities of Italy and Germany, as well as in London.

Among the numbers and features specially praised were the overture, the dramatic introduction to the second act, the clever use made of a Hindu tune, with other touches of exotic colouring, the marche céleste, the chorus of priestesses, several effective ensembles, and, above all, the romance for baritone, in the fourth act, which Lassalle (Scindia) sang incomparably, and which soon became a favourite also in the concert-halls. Associated with him in the cast was Joséphine de Reszke (sister of the famous Jean and Edouard), whose beautiful singing (Sita) was much admired.

Servières declares that thirty performances of a work of such merit were not enough, and he intimates that it was the influence of hostile criticisms on the public which prevented it from

having more. "It was at that time the fashion to say that Massenet could not write for the theatre and that the *Roi de Lahore* was an oratorio. This opera, like *Carmen*, had to make the tour of Europe before the frequenters of the Opéra made up their minds to acknowledge its worth."

In its Italian version it was produced successfully in Turin, Rome, Bologna, Venice, Trieste, Pisa, Milan, Genoa, Pesth, Munich, Dresden, Madrid, and London. This Italian version is more complete than the original French production; in the second act there is a serenade for Kaled, and in the fourth a scene which makes it clear how Sita was able to return to the temple. In April, 1879, the Opéra revived the opera, with brilliant success, its foreign triumphs having made an impression on the Parisian public and critics.*

Among those who heard this opera at its revival in 1879 was Tchaikovsky, who liked it so much that he bought the score and wrote to Mme. von Meck: "I know you do not care very much for Massenet, and hitherto I, too, have not felt drawn to him. His opera, however, has capti-

* In the opinion of Arthur Hervey *Le Roi de Lahore* "remains, perhaps, the best opera that Massenet has composed for the Paris Opéra." "It is more spontaneous than either *Le Cid* or *Le Mage*, and contains many portions of great excellence."

vated me by its rare beauty of form, its simplicity and freshness of ideas and style, as well as by its wealth of melody and distinction of harmony." Comparing its love duet with that in Goldmark's *Queen of Sheba*, he declares that Massenet's "is far simpler, but a thousand times fresher, more beautiful, more melodious."

ESCLARMONDE

None of Massenet's operas had a greater immediate success, or called forth more discussion in the press, than *Esclarmonde*.

For the year of the Paris Exposition of 1889 the managers of the Opéra-Comique wanted to stage a new work by him. As related in the chapter on *Werther*, they suggested that opera; but Massenet preferred to give them *Esclarmonde*, partly because of the greater opportunities it provided for brilliant scenic display, partly because he had enthusiastic confidence in the vocal and personal charms of Sibyl Sanderson, for whom the title rôle was written.

Esclarmonde is the young and ravishingly beautiful daughter of Phorcas, the Emperor of Byzantium, who possesses magical gifts. In the prologue, having assembled his courtiers and warriors, he announces that it is time for him to

abdicate in favour of Esclarmonde, who also wields supernatural power. But to preserve this power it is essential that her face should remain veiled until she is twenty. On the day when she reaches that age she is to be the bride of the victor in a tournament to be held at Byzantium.

On a terrace of the palace, overlooking the sea, we find Esclarmonde in the first act, longing for Roland, Count de Blois, with whom she had fallen in love at first sight. Her sister, Parséis, asks her why she does not use her magic arts to bring him to her. At that moment arrives Enéas, the betrothed of Parséis, who relates that the King Cléomer has made up his mind to offer his daughter's hand to Roland. Stung by jealousy, Esclarmonde decides to take immediate action. Obedient to her incantation, the spirits find Roland, and we see him hunting in the forest of Ardennes; then he boards a vessel which is to take him to a magic island where Esclarmonde will meet him and be his love.

This enchanted island is the scene of the second act. Roland has fallen asleep among the flowers, surrounded by dancing fairies. He is awakened by a kiss from the lips of Esclarmonde, and soon the two exchange vows of eternal love. In the following scene, placed in a room of the magic palace, Roland promises never to reveal

their secret union. It is his duty to leave her for a time, to help King Cléomer, who is besieged at Blois by the Saracens; but Esclarmonde consoles him with the promise to be with him every night, wherever he may be.

The siege of Blois is shown in the third act. A tribute of a hundred virgins is demanded by the Saracen King Sarwégur. "Who will deliver us from this enemy?" exclaims the King. "I will!" retorts Roland, emerging from the crowd. He challenges Sarwégur to single combat, and, armed with a magic sword, given him by Esclarmonde, wins an easy victory.

King Cléomer offers him his daughter's hand as a reward, but he declines, yet is unable to explain why, because he must keep his promise to Esclarmonde. The Bishop of Blois thereupon undertakes to clear up the mystery. Summoning the hero to the confessional, he compels him with threats of eternal punishment to reveal his secret, whereupon he inveighs against his sinful love for a sorceress. Roland begs for absolution. A moment after the bishop has left, the voice of Esclarmonde is heard and Roland prepares joyously to greet her; but at that moment the bishop returns, with a number of monks. Tearing away Esclarmonde's veil, he orders her to be seized; but the spirits carry her off after she has

reproached Roland for having broken his vow.

In the fourth act the scenery represents the depths of the forest of Ardennes, to which Phorcas has retired. A herald announces that the winner at the coming tournament shall succeed Phorcas on the throne as well as marry his daughter. But where is Esclarmonde? Phorcas finds out from Parséis and Enéas that she has left Constantinople to search for Roland. Angrily, he calls upon the spirits to bring her before him. When she comes, he tells her that either she must renounce her lover or he must die. She decides to save him at all costs. When he appears she tells him she can love him no more, and vanishes. Death alone seems desirable after this calamity, and when the herald appears again to proclaim the tournament, he resolves to seek it by entering the lists.

An epilogue takes us back to Byzantium. Richly attired, Esclarmonde appears in presence of Phorcas and his court, and soon the victor in the tournament is brought in, with lowered visor. It is Roland; he refuses the offer of the princess's hand, not knowing that it is Esclarmonde, but when she removes her veil, he is overcome with emotion and loudly proclaims his adoration of his imperial bride.

Esclarmonde is Massenet's Wagnerian confession of faith; in it he follows the Bayreuth master in choosing a legendary subject, in which the supernatural plays a prominent part, and in making free use of the principle of reminiscent or leading motives. "One might define *Esclarmonde*," wrote Camille Bellaigue, "as at the same time a small French *Tristan* and a small French *Parsifal*." As V. Wilder put it: "In the third scene, on the enchanted island, the prevailing reminiscence is of Parsifal, but a Parsifal who would transform himself into Tristan to sing, with the beloved, the passionate duo of the nuptial night." Wagnerian instruments (bass, clarinet, and contrabassoon) are used in the score, and overwhelming effects of orchestral sonority indulged in, as in the scene where the ramparts are destroyed, the landscape is devoured by flames, and the people lament the misfortunes of the besieged city. But, as Ernest Reyer wrote: "Who could find fault with this loosening of all the orchestral forces and say that the situation does not call for it?"

Like the second act of *Tristan*, the second of *Esclarmonde* is a lava stream of passion, but with a difference. "Jamais, je crois," wrote Camille Bellaigue, "on n'avait encore fait une description sonore aussi fidèle, aussi detaillée

de la manifestation physique des tendresses humaines. (Vous voyez que je tâche de m'exprimer convenablement.) Tout est noté et gradué; les violons commencent doucement; puis les altos arrivent à la rescousse, puis le quatuor, les sonorités s'enflent, le mouvement se précipite et le tout aboutit à un éclat général et terriblement significatif."

The insight into the mysteries of orchestration shown in this score, the many "délicieuses surprises" (Reyer), aroused the admiration of public and experts alike. While Wagner was the model, Massenet's individuality—which was strong enough to create a school of its own—is everywhere manifest. "No one," says R. A. Streatfeild, "could mistake *Esclarmonde* for the work of a German; in melodic structure and orchestral colouring it is French to the core." And Adolphe Jullien, who is far from being a partisan, says this opera "bears the composer's imprint on every page."

Massenet himself, when someone told him that *Les Erynnies* was his master-work, answered: "Wait till you have seen *Esclarmonde!*"

J. Weber called it "one of his best works"; and Charles Malherbe found it "beautiful because sincere; into it the composer did not only put all his knowledge, but all his heart."

In these days of revivals, such an opera should not be overlooked.*

The première was on May 15, 1889, and by the end of the Exposition, ninety-nine performances had been given. The original cast included Sibyl Sanderson as Esclarmonde, Gibert as Roland, Taskin as Phorcas. The librettists were Alfred Blau and Louis de Gramont. The work is entitled an "Opéra Romanesque."

LE MAGE

Marion Crawford's novel, *Zoroaster*, seems to have suggested this opera. At any rate, that eminent American novelist accused Jean Richepin —one of the several famous French men of letters whose co-operation Massenet succeeded in securing as librettist—of having stolen his thunder. As *The Magian* is not an opera now in vogue, it is hardly worth while to discuss this point, or to try to ascertain whether it was Massenet's pupil, Xavier Leroux, or his publisher, Hartmann, or his collaborator, Richepin, who suggested this subject to him. Suffice it to indicate the outlines of the story, as set to music.

* Detailed analyses of it may be found in the books of Imbert and Jullien, and in *Le Monde Artiste*, July 2, 1889 (Charles Malherbe).

Its hero is the sage Zarâstra, better known as Zoroaster. As general of the Persian army he has vanquished the Touranians and captured their beautiful queen, Anahita; he wishes to marry her and asks the King's consent, which, however, is not given because Amrou, the high priest, declares that Zarâstra is bound to another by the ties of love, this other being his own daughter, Varedha, priestess of voluptuousness, who swears that her father speaks the truth, although in reality the General had rejected her shameless advances indignantly.

Her infatuation makes her, in the second act, follow Zarâstra to the sacred mountain to which he has fled in despair and commenced to preach to his first disciples. Again he repels her, whereupon she turns on him with the fury of a woman scorned and tells him that his beloved, Anahita, has been chosen by the King to be his own bride.

It is the truth. After the initiation of a young priestess, Amrou unites the King with Anahita. But at that moment there is an attack on the temple by the Touranians, who have rallied. The temple is destroyed, while Anahita chants a war song. Varedha alone of the assembled Persians is not killed outright; and when Zarâstra, who has returned to deplore the fall of the temple, finds Anahita among the ruins and clasps her in

his arms, the dissolute priestess calls upon the statue of Djahi to destroy them. Immediately the statue gives forth flames, which spread in all directions, stopping the flight of the lovers; but the Magian, in turn, calls upon Madza, the god of fire, to put out the flames, and then escapes with his bride, while Varedha expires with a cry of jealous rage.

The opportunities for brilliant scenic display provided by this plot were not neglected by Ritt and Gailhard, the directors of the Opéra. The première was on March 16, 1891; but although there were altogether thirty-two performances that year, the opera has not been revived and is considered one of Massenet's weaker productions. One critic suggested that he wrote it in too great a hurry, in order to get ahead of Reyer's *Salammbó:* another that the scenic splendours crushed the music; a third that the librettist and the composer were too unlike in their tastes to play well into each other's hands.

Servières, nevertheless, finds not a few things to praise in the score; Victor Wilder wrote that the music was *fin de siècle* and the melody "d'une exquise déliquescence." What Jullien liked best in the whole opera was the prayer which the united brasses chant for Zarâstra when

he kneels at the foot of the sacred mountain invoking Ahoura Madza.

The cast included Vergnet as Zarâstra, Delmas as Amrou, Fiérens as Varedha, Lureau-Escalaïs as Anahita. The conductor was Vianesi.

LE PORTRAIT DE MANON

Novelists, after launching a particularly successful story, have frequently written a sequel to it, in which the same characters, or some of them, recur. The popularity of *Manon* suggested the writing of a libretto by Georges Boyer, in which its hero, Des Grieux, reappears.

After the death of Manon this chevalier is supposed to have retired to a provincial château, there to bewail his fate. To while away time he gives lessons to his nephew Jean, Vicomte de Mortcerf. Jean is in love with Aurore, a pupil of Des Grieux's friend, Tiberge. In the opening scene we see and hear this pretty and lively girl singing about the joys of life, with a chorus of peasants for a background.

Des Grieux, alone in his library, hears these strains, which recall to him happy days of his own life. But now all is melancholy and disenchantment. His eyes are fixed on a portrait of Manon, which he has preserved as a precious souvenir.

His revery is interrupted by the entry of Jean, whose heart bubbles over with love. The uncle scolds him. How can he, a nobleman, think of such a thing as marrying a girl who has neither family nor fortune?

Tiberge enters, and adds his entreaties to Jean's. But Des Grieux is inexorable; he remains deaf also to the united supplications of the lovers. Left alone, Jean and Aurore are plunged into despair, and talk of dying together. Then their mood changes, and Jean attempts to catch the girl and kiss her. In trying to elude him she knocks down the box in which Des Grieux keeps his portrait of Manon.

The sight of this suggests a happy thought to Tiberge, who at that moment returns. He takes Aurore away, leaving Jean with his uncle, who, after lecturing him, sends him away and again contemplates the portrait. Suddenly there appears before him a young woman, dressed as Manon was when she descended from the carriage at Amiens, and otherwise resembling Manon—and no wonder, since Aurore (for she it is) is the daughter of Manon's brother, Lescaut. But Des Grieux thinks he has seen an apparition of the real Manon, till Tiberge explains it all to him; whereupon des Grieux relents, and the lovers are made happy.

Musicians have the same privilege as novelists of reproducing motives from one work in another. Mozart, in his *Don Giovanni*, introduces an air from his *Figaro;* Wagner, in *Die Meistersinger*, cites two *Tristan and Isolde* motives when Hans Sachs refers to those lovers; and in *Parsifal*, when the swan is shot, we hear the swan motive, first used in *Lohengrin.* Massenet, therefore, followed good precedents in constructing the score of this opéra-comique largely with airs taken from his *Manon.* Any other proceeding, in truth, would have seemed inappropriate and inartistic.

"Cleverly, discreetly, and with much charm, the composer evoked musical reminiscences from his *Manon* score," wrote Georges Servières, who was by no means a partisan of Massenet. "This dainty and graceful little work," he adds, "was praised by all." "This little score (partitionette) of M. Massenet," wrote Victorien de Joncières, "is a real jewel, finely cut, of an exquisite grace"; and he mentions one of the touches of imagination supplied by the composer: while Jean recites for his uncle and tutor a lesson from Roman history, the orchestra plays a light "accompagnement à la forme scholastique du plus piquant effet."

How pretty are the diminutives the French

have to describe a light and airy work like this "bluette!" "Ouvrette," "partitionette," "musiquette"—the Spanish alone share with them the linguistic chance to belittle a thing in a complimentary, admiring way.

Le Portrait de Manon—which comes between *Thaïs* and *La Navarraise* chronologically—had its first performance on May 8, 1894, at the Opéra-Comique, with a cast including Fugère, Grivot, Elven, and Mlle. Laisné. It was given fifteen times that year, and six times in 1895.

Hugues Imbert called this comic opera "une bluette gracieuse, plutôt écrite pour le salon que pour le théâtre," and he thinks that Massenet may have this kind of a vogue in view for this work. Too light for most opera-houses, it would certainly seem to lend itself well to amateur performances, at least in circles where the story of Manon Lescaut is known.

CENDRILLON

Massenet's fifteenth work for the theatre was not an opera, but a fairy tale set to music; "Conte de Fées en Quatre Actes et Six Tableaux," is the official title. How did he happen to bring out this version of Charles Perrault's nursery story?

It was generally supposed that the extraor-

dinary success of Humperdinck's fairy tale, *Hänsel und Gretel*, had induced Massenet to try his luck, too, with this genre of opera. His librettist, however—Henri Cain—wrote to the critic, Adolphe Jullien, that he and the composer had dallied with this plot and sketched their work before Humperdinck had launched his, and that the success of *Hänsel und Gretel*, far from indicating to them the path to follow, came near making them give up *Cendrillon* after it had been sketched.

Humperdinck's opera, it may be added, was immediately successful when first produced, in 1893, while *Cendrillon* was not given to the world till six years later. It had its first hearing in Paris at the Opéra-Comique, on May 24, 1899, and was applauded by the critics as well as the public. Albert Carré, who had been recently appointed director of that theatre, staged it with extraordinary splendour, to show what he could do in that direction, and it was "up to" Massenet, as we say colloquially, to provide a feast for the ears equal to the "plaisirs des yeux" promised by his manager. That he succeeded, was generally acknowledged.

It is love at first sight for both Prince Charmant and Cinderella—adorned by the Fairy—when they meet at the ball. Subsequently, alone

at home, Cinderella imagines she will die during the night and says farewell to all her belongings. Luckily her godmother, the Fairy, is awake. Hearing herself invoked at the same moment by both Cinderella and the lovelorn Prince, she removes the curtain of foliage which had prevented them from seeing each other, and they embrace:—both have the same dream. In the last act, all the Princesses in the world are called together to try on the small slipper found at the court-ball. Cinderella is brought there, too, by her Fairy; and the Prince, recognizing her promptly, offers her his arm.

It must have been a pleasant pastime for Massenet, Jullien thinks, to busy himself with this light poem, to exercise his skill and experience in inventing music equally airy and diminutive; "and it is only just to say that he succeeded. This score is one of those in which he has shown the greatest suppleness and skill, without putting much musical pith into it, but lavishing ingenious effects of rhythm, odd contrasts of colours, and enlivening volumes of sound whenever the attention is in danger of flagging."

There are tender scenes of love, alternating with comic episodes; and there are dances which particularly pleased this critic. "It seems to

me," he adds, "that the most graceful passage in the whole world is probably the tender declaration of Cendrillon: 'You are my Prince Charmant,' where the oboe repeats, bar by bar, with intense sweetness, what the voice has just sung."

Effective also is the grand march in which the most diverse instruments, among them fifes, gongs, castanets, are called into play to announce the princesses from all parts of the world.

Louis Schneider declares that Massenet "dusted the tale of Perrault and the libretto of Henri Cain with a fine powder of sounds." He was particularly impressed by the skill displayed in evoking the spirit of another age. "Massenet has given to his imitations the stilted grace and the deliberate simplicity of the dances of the reign of Louis XIII, which he has succeeded in reviving: the minuet of Madame de la Haltière, the concert at the King's with its odd modulations; the entry of the daughters of the nobility, so original; that of the fiancés, accompanied by the oboes in thirds; that of Mandores, with delicious rhythms; the Florentine, and finally the Rigaudon—all this is like bringing back to life the colours of that time; it means a power of penetration, a sharpness of vision which pierces the ages—in a word, a skill that borders on the marvellous."

The parts of Cendrillon and Prince Charmant at the première in Paris were taken by Mlles. Giraudon and Emelen.*

CHÉRUBIN

Although Massenet's seventeenth opera, *Chérubin*, is not considered one of his master-works, it is possible that Oscar Hammerstein might have produced it had his Manhattan opera seasons continued another year or two. He had among his singers three of the artists who helped to create this work when it was first given, on February 14, 1905, at Monte Carlo, under the direction of Raoul Gunsbourg, who is always on the lookout for novelties. These artists were Mary Garden, Lina Cavalieri, and Maurice Renaud.†

*Jullien in his *Musiciens D'Hier et D'Aujourd'hui*, p. 311, mentions four composers who previously to Massenet had written operas on this subject; one of them was by Rossini, and it was less appreciated in Italy (1817) than in Paris (1822).

† Mary Garden impersonated the title rôle also at the Parisian première, on May 23 of the same year. The part of the Spanish dancer, L'Ensoleillad, which Lina Cavalieri had at Monte Carlo, was taken in Paris by Mme. Vallandri; nor did the Parisians enjoy the privilege of seeing M. Renaud as Le Philosophe, that part being assumed at the Opéra-Comique by M. Fugère. Marguerite Carré was the Nina at both the premières.

LINA CAVALIERI

The story of how this opera came to be written is curious. A play of the same name had been accepted for performance at the Comédie-Française; but after the dress rehearsal its author, Francis de Croisset, withdrew it, and the public never had a chance to hear it. To Massenet, who happened to be present at that rehearsal, the little play seemed well adapted for operatic purposes, and so he asked M. de Croisset for permission to set it to music. The playwright, surprised and pleased, sought counsel with the expert, Henri Cain, and together they put the verses into shape for the composer, who fell upon his task with his usual avidity and soon had it completed.

One day, so Jullien relates, some one expressed astonishment to Massenet at his ability to work twelve or fourteen hours a day. "Mais oui, mais oui," replied the composer, "that often happens. I worked at *Chérubin*, which I have just completed, two hundred and ten hours at a stretch, with no break except the time needed for meals and sleep. When I take up such a task, I do not know what fatigue means."

Chérubin is supposed to be the same youngster as the Cherubino who, in the *Marriage of Figaro* of Beaumarchais and Mozart, does so much mischief. He is but seventeen in the French-

man's opera, yet his good looks and audacity make him a veritable Don Juan. It is hardly worth while to relate in detail his exploits as a lady killer and duellist. His most interesting affair is with the Spanish dancer, l'Ensoleillad, who has been sent for by the King, but stops to dally with him. The good advice of his friend, the Philosopher, is wasted, as usual. Yet in the end he reforms and marries the young and broken-hearted Nina, when she is about to enter a convent.

As frothy as this play is the music written for it. It is tuneful, and some of the tunes are associated with the several characters, after the fashion of leading motives. The episode of the Spanish dancer gives special occasion for some exotic colouring, and at the end there is a deliberate musical allusion to the serenade in *Don Giovanni,* which the critics pronounced a clever stroke.

To Schneider this "comédie chantée," as it is called on the title-page, seems "like a Watteau darkened under Andalusian skies." Jullien feels disinclined to place it in the first rank of Massenet's works, or even the second. "On leaving the theatre," he writes, "when this froth of sound has subsided, one feels a trifle embarrassed at having allowed one's self to be

so carried away; and if one wishes to probe to the core this dazzling, shimmering music, it is easy to see that there is in it little substance and novelty. But when the curtain goes up again we promptly come under its spell once more, and again we feel the lively attractiveness of this fresh and sparkling music. A great magician, in truth, is the composer of *Chérubin.*"

Concerning Mary Garden, the same eminent critic wrote: "She is Chérubin himself, in flesh and bones; she was the joy and delight of the evening. By reason of her slenderness and agility, her easy and graceful manner, with her innocent airs of conquest and her naïve mien of vexation, she is truly the irresistible youth in whose presence all hearts surrender. And to think that M. de Croisset, only the day before, insisted that his Chérubin should not be played by a woman! His, perhaps; but not that of M. Massenet."

ARIANE

From the beginning of opera, about the year 1600, till far into the nineteenth century the favourite source of librettos was the mythology of the Greeks and Romans. Most of them were unspeakably silly, but as no one listened to the words, or paid any attention to the plot, it mat-

tered little. However, as the French say, ridicule is deadly. The parodies of these plots perpetrated by Offenbach and his collaborators doubtless helped to end this custom; and thenceforth, if a composer borrowed an ancient classical legend, he found it advisable to get a real man of letters to put it into shape for him.

This is what Massenet did when he took a fancy to the old tale of Ariadne and Theseus. Catulle Mendès, versed in the art of writing opera texts as well as other kinds of verse, supplied him with a "book" of five acts which has genuine poetic merit; and while it follows in the main the classic story, some new and effective details are introduced. Mendès also took pains to point out the symbolism inherent in the characters of the myth; but on this we need not dwell, as opera-goers are not interested in symbolism. They like a "round unvarnish'd tale" —a point composers and their collaborators would do well to bear in mind.

Such a tale, on the whole, is that embodied in *Ariane*. The first scene is placed on the island of Crete, to which Theseus has brought a shipload of youths and virgins, the annual tribute unhappy Athens has to pay to the voracious Minotaur. Having learned the secret

of the labyrinth from Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, he enters it with these young victims intended for the man-eating monster that dwells in it. Ariadne remains behind, prays to the goddess of Love, and tells her twin sister, Phædra, of her mad passion for Theseus. Soon loud cries of terror are heard in the labyrinth; but they presently cease, for Theseus slays the monster and soon thereafter appears on the stage covered with blood; while the young folks he has saved joyously gather fruits and flowers. Enthusiastically the gratified hero addresses Ariadne, inviting her to follow him to Athens and be his queen.

His vessel, when the curtain rises again, is seen traversing the Ægean Sea, past its many picturesque islands, the names of which the pilot proclaims, while the chorus of young folks sings of their attractions. Phædra also is on board, and the sight of her sister's happiness makes her more and more envious of her good fortune in securing such a lover. Suddenly a violent storm arises and the ship, beaten off its course, lands at Naxos.

Here they remain several months, during which Ariadne discovers, to her grief, that the hero's affection for her is cooling. In truth, Theseus has fallen madly in love with Phædra. Ariadne

discovers the two in a tender embrace and furiously sends her sister away. But when news is brought her shortly afterward that Phædra, having laid a sacrilegious hand on the statue of Adonis, has been killed by the falling marble, she forgives everything, and implores the goddess of Love to restore her sister.

The goddess consents and sends Ariadne to the lower world, under escort of the Three Graces, to implore Persephone. Her request is at first refused, but when Ariadne offers Persephone a bunch of fragrant roses she is overcome and allows her to take back Phædra to the upper world—alas! for no sooner have they arrived in Naxos when the fickle Theseus carries her off on his ship, abandoning Ariadne, who, following the call of the sirens, throws herself into the sea.

The episode of the lower world and the roses is an interpolation of Mendès, adopted, obviously, to emphasize his ideal of Ariadne as the symbol of instinctive womanly love, tender and forgiving even when wronged.

Apart from a few suggestions of Greek tonality in the appeals to the divinities, Massenet made no attempt to introduce Hellenic local colour in this score; his melody is "Massenétique," and that was why the audience applauded it, while

his orchestration was found as clever and dazzling as usual.

A German critic* expressed his surprise at Massenet's indubitable success in the field of mythological-romantic opera. "One would not have expected of the gentle, sentimental composer of *Manon* the elemental dramatic power manifested here, particularly in the first and third acts, and one is astonished to find in the elegant, worldly, erotic Massenet at the same time so passionate and almost demoniac an artistic temperament."

What impressed Jullien particularly was Massenet's skill, in the scene in the lower world, in making the hearer realize "the lugubrious torpor prevailing in the kingdom of the dead. The composer seems to have put all the sadness of his heart into the impassive plaint of Persephone." Concerning the music of this whole scene, Massenet said that it came to him all at once, complete and unpremeditated.

To the present time Massenet has preserved his allegiance to Wagner. The sirens are cousins of the Rhine maidens, and the fight with the Minotaur suggests Siegfried and the dragon. Mendès, also a worshipper at the Wagnerian shrine, did not bear in mind to add

* *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, November 9, 1906.

this when, in an interview, he congratulated his collaborator on having found in him "a marvellous Lully, a perfect Rameau, and a complete Gluck"—the dances in the infernal regions being written in the style of those masters.

Summing up his impressions, Jullien remarks: "The funeral procession which brings back to the palace the body of Phædra is treated with no less skill, and crowns most appropriately this series of scenes—tender, violent, or melancholy—all written in a style which is at the same time very modern and slightly retrospective."

Surely here is an opera that ought to be made known to English and American audiences.

The first performance of *Ariane* was at the Opéra on October 31, 1906, the cast including Bréval as Ariadne, Grandjean as Phædra, Muratore as Theseus, Delmas as Pirithoüs.

THÉRÈSE

Only three months after the Parisian première of *Ariane*, on February 7, 1907, Raoul Gunsbourg produced, at Monte Carlo, another Massenet novelty, entitled *Thérèse*, a "drame musical" in two acts, the libretto being by still another eminent French writer, Jules Claretie. The cast included two artists known and admired in

America: Clément as Armand, and Dufranne as André Thorel. The part of Thérèse was assumed by Lucy Arbell.

Variety is the spice of Massenet's operas. From the Greek mythology of *Ariane* we pass, in *Thérèse*, to the French Revolution. The heroine is the wife of the Girondin, André Thorel, who has bought at auction the confiscated castle of his royalist friend Armand de Clerval, with the intention of ultimately restoring it to him as soon as it will be safe for him to return to France. In truth, Armand is back already, in disguise; he is on the way to join the royalists in Vendée, but cannot resist the temptation to visit his domains and call upon Thérèse. As a boy he had loved her, and she him. The fact that she is now the wife of his most devoted friend does not prevent him from coveting her. Thorel takes him into his house, at the risk of his own life. At his wife's request he provides Armand with a safe-conduct, with the aid of which the perfidious marquis hopes to carry off Thérèse.

In the second act the portier comes home hastily to inform Thérèse that her husband has been arrested and is being carried to the scaffold. The terrible news brings about a revulsion of feeling. Deaf to the entreaties of Armand, she opens the window and cries "Vive

le Roi!" The mob thereupon furiously assaults her house, and she is carried off to share her husband's fate. Armand escapes.

This breathless action recalls *La Navarraise.* Musically, too, Thérèse suggests that turbulent opera. "Massenet's music is to a certain extent thrust into the background by the exciting incidents of the plot," writes Mr. Streatfeild. "The cries of the crowd, the songs of the soldiers, and the roll of the drums leave but little space for musical development. Still *Thérèse* contains many charming passages of melody and grace, though it will certainly not rank among the composer's masterpieces."

Schneider was impressed by the local colour in the score: "It is with an astonishingly simple device (but simplicity is not always the simplest thing to attain) that Massenet depicts, beginning with the prelude, the noise of the unchained mob; those three persistent notes which mean the beat to arms, recur in the final scene with an agonising effect."

"In the opening scenes of the opera it is the impression of sadness that calls for praise. The scenery, the music, the atmosphere, are all in harmony, everything is sad—not solemnly so, but just grey, in an intimate, charming way."

BACCHUS

Pleased with their success in the case of *Ariane*, Mendès and Massenet once more put their heads together and produced a sequel to that opera, which they called *Bacchus*. It is connected with *Ariane* by means of a prologue in which we see once more the goddess of the lower world, Persephone. Still grateful to Ariadne for the whiff of the upper world she had brought to her with the bunch of roses, she summons one of the Fates, the all-seeing Clotho, and asks her what has become of Ariadne. Clotho replies that she is sailing toward the Orient on the ship of the handsome Bacchus.

That deity has become enamoured of Ariadne, and, to win her love, has assumed the form and face of Theseus, wherefore she willingly follows him to the shores of distant India. They proceed, with his retinue of satyrs and bacchantes, to the land of Sakias, the queen of which is the Amazonian Amahelli. Her forces are routed by the cohorts of Bacchus, but she has an ally in Ramavaçou, the Buddhist priest, who, at this critical moment, summons to her aid the apes in the woods. These powerful brutes fall upon the companions of Bacchus and in a moment the battle-field is strewn with corpses. Amahelli

comes at night with a lantern to gloat over the body of her enemy; but Bacchus is unharmed; and when she sees him, her hatred turns to sudden love, which is fanned by jealousy when Ariadne, who has also escaped the simian carnage, calls to him. "You are his spouse?" cries the Amazon. "And you are beautiful. Die then." But Bacchus checks her, and makes her do homage to Ariadne. Then he plays his trump card, providing wine for one and all, including the apes.

The wily queen, however, follows a plan of her own. Ariadne, hearing the sound of trees that are felled, asks the meaning of it, and Amahelli replies that a funeral pile is being constructed, by order of the supreme deity, on which Bacchus must die unless a "sœur des Puissants, nubile et vierge encore," sacrifices herself in his place. Ariadne promptly claims the privilege. A funeral procession escorts her to the place of execution. Bacchus misses Ariadne, but too late to prevent the catastrophe; whereupon he calls upon Zeus to destroy Amahelli with a thunderbolt.

"What a perfectly crazy thing!" the reader will exclaim. "How *could* Massenet set such a nightmare to music?"

Not having heard the opera or seen the score

I cannot say; but Jullien, whose praise of *Ariane* I cited, declares that Massenet, as if discouraged, has written for this "profondément obscur et puéril" libretto, "a score singularly poor and empty (dépouillée), in which one looks in vain for the sovereign cleverness of workmanship, the sensibility, the sensuous quality, which are his main characteristics."

Much was said in advance about the battle of the apes—too much, the same critic declares; "has anybody ever, in fact, seen a piece more paltry, more meagre, and less terrifying than that in which the composer intended to depict the terrific struggle of the apes with the men, having attempted, so we are told, most conscientiously, to give an exact imitation of the sharp cry of the 'uprooters of rocks' ?"

Some of the other commentators are less severe, and Massenet himself is reported to have declared that the two Ariadne operas "se complètent merveilleusement"; but the consensus of opinion seems to be that this is not one of the works by which his name will live. One suspects that his habitual amiability made it impossible for him to tell his friend Mendès that he did not want this poem. And yet, when all is said and done, one finds that this story of

Ariadne and Bacchus in India haunts one by reason of its very fantasticalness.

DON QUICHOTTE

Raoul Gunsbourg, the enterprising manager of Monte Carlo, is responsible for the last of Massenet's operas, up to 1910. In 1904 he heard a play by Jacques Le Lorraine, which he admired so much that he spoke of it to Massenet, who also liked it and decided to turn it into an opera, with the consent and aid of its author. Unfortunately, just at this time Le Lorraine died. But the plan was not abandoned, Henri Cain being engaged to prepare the libretto.

Don Quichotte and Sancho Panza, together with the incident of the windmills, are taken from the book of Cervantes; for the plot the Frenchmen are responsible. Dulcinea, in their version, is a courtesan, with many admirers, among them Don Quichotte, who appears under her balcony and sings a serenade, the consequence being a duel with one of her cavaliers. Dulcinea separates them. She is much amused when he proceeds, in flowery language, to offer her marriage, and she replies that he must first restore to her a precious necklace stolen from her by the brigand Ténébrun.

Courtesy of Le Théâtre

DON QUICHOTTE

Enthusiastically he sets out on his Rosinante to perform this deed, accompanied by the faithful Sancho. Coming across the windmills, he takes them for giants extending their arms menacingly; he charges and is carried upward on one of the wings.

In the third act he succeeds in finding the brigands. They capture and threaten him, and prepare the gallows, but ultimately are so much impressed by his gentleness and nobility of character that they not only allow him to depart unharmed, but give him the necklace stolen from Dulcinea.

With it he returns to her home, creating a sensation by appearing in the midst of a brilliant fête. She is overcome with joy on getting back the necklace; but when he renews his proposal of marriage she frankly tells him what sort of a woman she is.

In the final act we find Don Quichotte at the foot of a large tree, in a dense forest, dying. To Sancho, who has remained with him to the last, he recalls the fertile island he has promised him. "Take *this* isle," he says, "which it is always in my power to present—the Isle of Dreams." And muttering once more the name Dulcinea, he expires.

Raoul Gunsbourg is noted for his ingenuity

in overcoming difficulties of stage mechanism. The problem of the windmill was cleverly solved. In some of the scenic changes delay was avoided by the use of a cinematograph. An effective touch was given to the last scene, in which Don Quichotte apostrophises the evening-star as Dulcinea, by the momentary apparition of Mme. Arbell, who impersonated that rôle.

The première of this "comédie-lyrique" at Monte Carlo was on February 19, 1910. A few weeks later M. Gunsbourg took his whole company and outfit to Brussels, where the performance was witnessed also by many Parisians. *L'Étoile* called it a "soirée bien parisienne—et, naturellement, triomphe bien parisien aussi." There was a great deal of applause, with many recalls. "At the end of the opera, while the public gave the artists, particularly Chaliapine, delirious ovations, it would have been glad to include in them the authors, who were loudly called for; but in vain. M. Cain, over-modest, had disappeared; and as for M. Massenet, he had, as always, gone to bed long before that hour."

The critics agreed that much of the brilliant success of *Don Quichotte* was due to the impersonation of Chaliapine, whose make-up, song, and action combined to make, in the words of Paul

Gilson, "a striking creation, which it will be difficult to forget or to duplicate." He was ably supported by Mme. Arbell as Dulcinea, and by M. Gresse as Sancho.

"It is not necessary to comment," wrote M. Gilson in *Le Soir*, "on the consummate skill with which the personalities have been characterized and the scenes developed. The mastery of Massenet is, in these respects, absolute, unequalled." This critic was struck, at the same time, by the growing simplicity of Massenet's scores. "The orchestra is reduced to a minimum. The modulations have become rarefied; the key of C major, in particular, recurs with a persistence which recalls, at times, the manner of the old French masters, notably Rameau, whom the composer of *Don Quichotte* seems to wish to emulate."

A similar impression was made on the critic of the *Indépendance Belge*,* who expresses his surprise that "a man who, like Massenet, has created a style entirely his own, a 'manière' which distinguishes him from all his contemporaries excepting those who have tried to imitate him," should end by making his score "*un monstrueux assemblage d'éléments entièrement disparates*. There is a little of everything in *Don*

* The newspapers here cited are all Belgian.

Quichotte. In the fourth act, during the fête at Dulcinea's house, there is at first a sort of Spanish exoticism à la Bizet, but more crude and coarse; it is the famous *phrase massenétique* with its feline and sensual inflections; after that comes a chorus of guests—pleasing as such—which might have been written by Lully. The entrance of Don Quichotte and Sancho and the dialogue between master and squire have traits which recall the style of Mozart; the end of the act, with Sancho's great air, is consecrated again to the *phrase massenétique décadente.*"

The first and third acts did not please this critic, but he was impressed by the final scene of the opera. "Here M. Massenet has given proof of discernment and taste by reducing the music to its simplest expression: a gentle murmur of muted strings and wood-wind instruments, a slight contrapuntal elaboration, discreet and veiled, on which is superimposed the dull, wan song of the good chevalier and his squire."

In the fourth act, where Don Quichotte discovers the truth regarding his idol from her own lips, H. L., of *Le Patriote*, admired the delicious melody of the duo. Moreover, "the sadness and suffering, the whole gamut of disillusion and of

patient resignation—all these are mirrored in the music, and Mme. Arbell better deserved the approval of the public at this moment than for the mediocre chansonette which she sings to her own accompaniment on the guitar."

VII

LIST OF MASSENET'S COMPOSITIONS

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LIST OF MASSENET'S COMPOSITIONS

A : STAGE WORKS

AS the title-page indicates, this volume is devoted to Massenet and his operas. Some of his orchestral works and a few of the choral compositions were referred to in the chapter narrating the incidents of his career, because it was necessary to show how they helped to pave his way to the opera-houses. To-day it is almost exclusively as an opera composer that Massenet is known to the world, at least outside of France, an exception being the songs, some of which are favourites everywhere. The remaining pages of this volume will therefore contain little more than lists of his miscellaneous works, without comment.

For the theatre there are, beside the twenty-one operas, two slighter works, which call for a word or two.

Le Carillon. This "Légende Mimée et Dansée" is a one-act ballet the subject of which was

suggested to Massenet by the tenor Van Dyck. It was produced in Vienna on February 21, 1892, five days after *Werther*.

Cigale. A "Divertissement-Ballet" in two acts; first performance February 4, 1904, at the Opéra-Comique. A brief account of these two works may be found in Schneider's sumptuous volume, which also devotes some space to the songs and the instrumental works.

Including *Le Carillon* and *Cigale* and a few unpublished scores, we have the following chronological list of stage works:

La Grand' Tante, 1867.

Esméralda. Composed in Rome; never performed or printed.

Méduse, 1868–70. Unpublished.

La Coupe du roi de Thulé. (See page 181.)

Don César de Bazan. 1872.

L'Adorable Bel-Boul. Performed in the Cercle de l'Union artistique, 1874; suppressed by Massenet.

Bérengère et Anatole. Played in the same club, 1876.

Le Roi de Lahore, 1877.

Hérodiade, 1881.

Manon, 1884.

Le Cid, 1885.

Esclarmonde, 1889.

Le Mage, 1891.
Werther, 1892.
Le Carillon, 1892.
Thaïs, 1894.
Le Portrait de Manon, 1894.
La Navarraise, 1894.
Sapho, 1897.
Cendrillon, 1899.
Grisélidis, 1901.
Le Jongleur de Notre Dame, 1902.
Cigale, 1904.
Chérubin, 1905.
Ariane, 1906.
Thérèse, 1907.
Bacchus, 1909.
Don Quichotte, 1910.

Massenet also contributed orchestral numbers to several plays: Dèlourède's *Hetman*, Sardou's *Théodora* and *Le Crocodile;* and orchestrated and completed the opera *Kassya*, which Delibes left unfinished when he died.

B: PRINCIPAL CHORAL COMPOSITIONS *

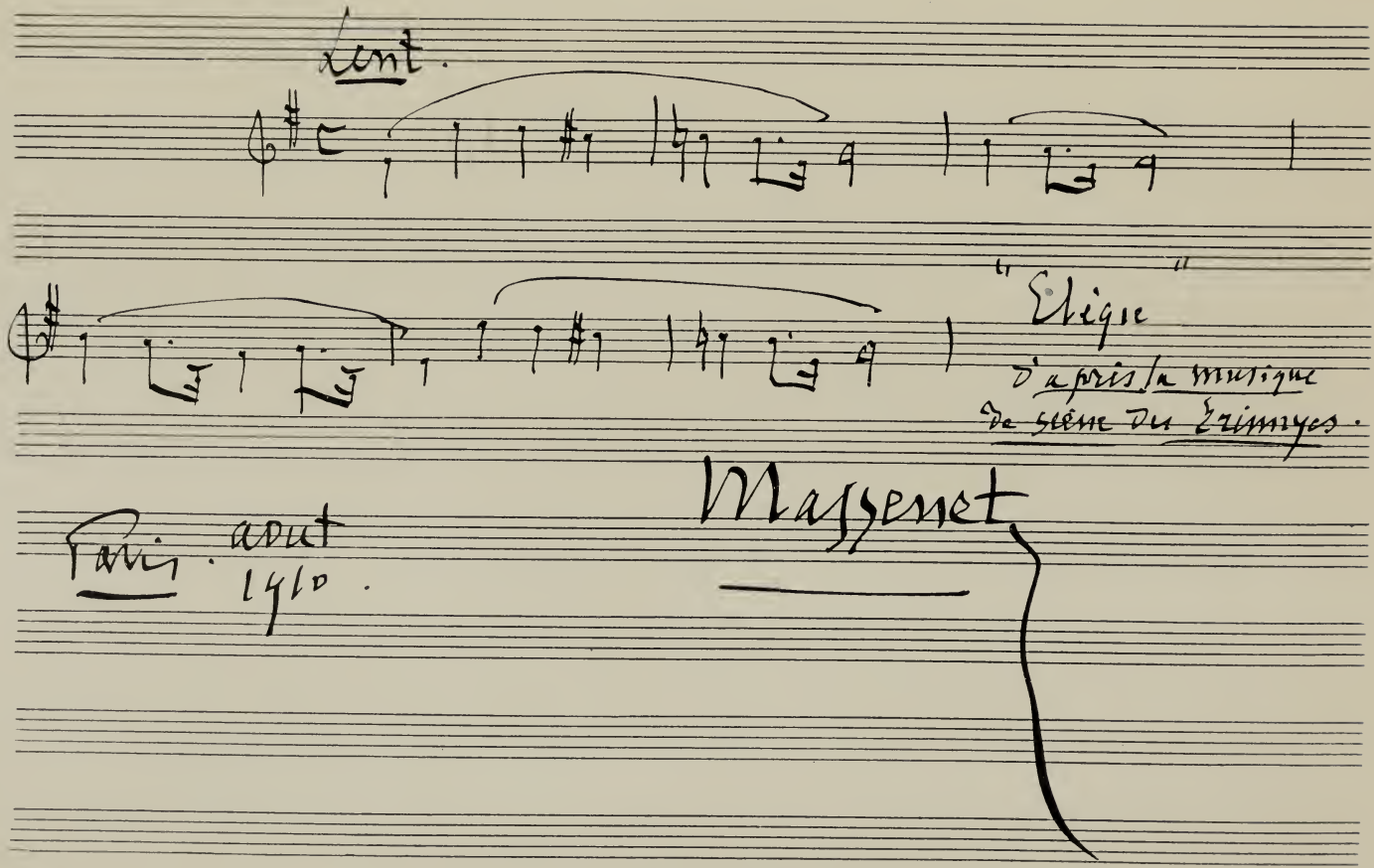
Les Erynnies—Marie Magdeleine—Eve—Narcisse—La Vierge—La Terre Promise.

* For a more complete list of the vocal works see Solenière, pp. 153–156. For comments on them and the miscellaneous works see Schneider, pp. 351–71.

C: SONGS AND DUOS

As a composer of lyric and sacred songs no Frenchman has enjoyed greater or more deserved popularity than Massenet. The gem of his songs for one voice is the famous *Élégie*, with accompaniment for violoncello as well as voice. This ranks with the best German *lieder*. Originally it was a number in the choral work, *Les Erynnies*. The composer has kindly contributed an autograph copy of the melody to this volume. It is an emotional song, and the accompaniment is made specially interesting by imitation strains.

There are more than a hundred solo songs and duos, including those of a religious character. Among those most spontaneous in melody and most piquant harmonically are *Un Adieu*, *A la trépassée*, *Roses d'octobre; Pensée d'automne*, *Je t'aime*, *Nuit d'Espagne*, *Berceuse*, *Chant provençal*, *Première danse*, the *Ave Maria*, based on the Meditation in *Thaïs*. Tastes differ and amateurs interested in these lyrics will do well to read over the songs and mark those they like best. There are six volumes of twenty each, besides a number printed separately. There are also several song cycles, a form introduced in France by Massenet.



FACSIMILE ÉLÉGIE

D: INSTRUMENTAL PIECES

There is no symphony in the list of Massenet's orchestral works, but among them are a symphonic poem entitled *Visions*, the *Ouverture de Concert* (1863) and *Ouverture de Phèdre*, and six suites, entitled *Scènes hongroises*, *Scènes pittoresques*, *Scènes dramatiques*, *Scènes napolitaines*, *Scènes de féerie*, *Scènes alsaciennes*, besides a *Sarabande espagnole*, a *Marche de Szabady*, and the early *Pompeïa*, comprising four numbers. In the *Noce flamande* a chorus is introduced.

Chamber music is represented by a string quartet, *Dichetto* for string quartet, double bass, flute, oboe, clarionet, horn, bassoon, and three pieces for violoncello and piano.

There is a concerto for piano in which Hungarian melodies are introduced after the manner of Liszt. It is not considered one of Massenet's masterworks by those who have heard it; altogether, he wrote little for the piano. His *Sept improvisations* are as difficult as a concerto. More in the usual "salon" style are his *Impromptu*, *Eau dormante*, *Eau courante*, *Toccata*, and *Parade militaire*. Among the numbers in his *Dix pièces de genre* there is a transcription of the lovely *Elégie*. The *Scènes de bal* is for four hands.

Schneider mentions a *Suite de trois pièces* for piano based on pieces originally composed by him for violoncello and piano, and two recent works: *Papillons noirs* and *Papillons blancs*, "qui sont d'aimables badinages pianistiques."

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

THE present volume is the first in the English language devoted entirely to Massenet; the first, in fact, in any language, with two exceptions. One of these is: *Massenet: L'Homme—Le musicien,* by Louis Schneider (Paris: L. Carteret, 1908), a sumptuous volume, richly illustrated with portraits, scenes from operas, and facsimiles of pages from scores and other documents. It is warmly indorsed by the composer in a letter to me, and may be considered entirely reliable as to facts.

Profiles D'Artistes Contemporains by Hugues Imbert (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1897) gives 130 of its 335 pages to Massenet, the others being concerned with Alexis de Castillon, Paul Lacombe, Charles Lefebvre, Antoine Rubinstein, and Edouard Schuré. The pages devoted to Massenet are concerned with his life as well as his operas up to 1906 (*La Navarraise*). There are many details of interest not included in Schneider's more elaborate work.

Massenet: Étude Critique et Documentaire, by

Eugène de Solenière, is the other book referred to as being concerned entirely with Massenet. It is not a biography, however, but simply a monograph on the operas, up to *La Navarraise.* It is published in Paris (Bibliothèque D'Art de "La Critique," 1897) and is out of print. The author gives details regarding first performances, casts, etc., not recorded elsewhere, and there is an introduction in which he expresses some opinions of his own; but the rest of his volume is made up chiefly of reprints of the opinions expressed in prominent newspapers on the Massenet operas when first produced.

La Musique Française Moderne by Georges Servières (Paris) includes a valuable critical essay of about a hundred pages on Massenet.

French Music in the XIXth Century, by Arthur Hervey (London: Grant Richards, 1903) gives only seven of its 271 pages to Massenet.

Masters of French Music, by Arthur Hervey (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1894), discusses Massenet and his principal compositions in a chapter of 34 pages.

The Opera, by R. A. Streatfeild (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1907), gives brief but lucid summaries of the librettos of the most important Massenet operas, with judicious comments, all in 11 pages.

Musiciens D'Aujourd'hui; Musiciens D'hier et D'Aujourd'hui. Three volumes (1892–1910) by Adolphe Jullien which include critical (sometimes hypercritical) analyses of most of the Massenet operas.

To most of these books, particularly the two named first, I am under obligations for material used in the present volume. Other sources of information, including newspaper articles and personal talks with artists, are mentioned in the text and footnotes. Foremost in importance among these is the autobiographic sketch Massenet contributed to the *Century Magazine* (November, 1892). Some use has been made, as a matter of course, of the reviews I wrote, for the *Evening Post*, of the nine Massenet operas which have been produced in New York. For permission to reproduce photographs my thanks are due to Charles H. Davis, of Davis and Eickemeyer, and to Mischkin, Aimé Dupont, and E. S. Bennett of New York, and Paul Berger of Paris.

INDEX

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